

October 27, 2017

Professor Beth Baron, MESA President, City University of New York  
Dr. Amy W. Newhall, MESA Executive Director

Workshop on Armenian Turkish Scholarship (WATS) Conference, 2017, Berlin  
Title: "Past in the Present: European Approaches to the Armenian Genocide"

Dear Professor Baron and Dr. Newhall,

Your letter of September 15, 2017 addressed to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım of Turkey, copied to a number of other dignitaries, has belatedly come to my attention. <https://mesana.org/pdf/Turkey20170915.pdf>

In the letter you are expressing your "deep concern" about the steps certain circles in Turkey are taking to prevent scholars based in Turkey from participating in the aforementioned WATS conference in Berlin (September 15-18, 2017) having the theme of "Armenian Genocide."

You state that such action is an "assault" on the academic freedom of scholars in Turkey, signifying a trend of "stifling scholarship."

In the letter you mention no fewer than 10 times the precepts of "academic freedom" and "freedom of expression," both essential to scholarly work, and both of which you state you hold in high esteem.

Dear ladies, your letter, considered on its face value, would be universally applauded in the academic circles. Except that you have left out one critical piece of information in your letter: the WATS conferences, altogether held 10 times since 2000, have been expressly one-sided or exclusionary. Those welcome are those academicians, Turkish or foreign, who subscribe to the "genocide" thesis. (Those with Turkish names, of course, are particularly welcome!). In contrast, scholars or researchers who oppose "Armenian genocide," whether Turkish or foreign, have been excluded from the conferences. They are "persona non-grata" by design.

With the Berlin conference, for example, Turkish researchers known to support the Turkish view who wanted to attend the conference were turned down. In some cases the excuses given were "lack of space." In other instances requests or inquiries for registration went unanswered. One person in the latter category who made a "crash entrance" to the conference – without any questions asked at the door – soon attracted attention in the conference hall, and was asked to leave because he was not registered. He had noticed that the conference hall, with 25-30 people present, was less than half-full.

So much about "lack of space"!

As persons holding academic titles, and as Directors of a learned society MESA, you should be aware that conferences dealing with scholarly work should be open to diverse opinions without bias or prejudice. At the heart of such conferences is free exchange of ideas. This is what "freedom of expression" is about.

Otherwise a WATS conference such as the one that was held in Berlin is no different than the Ku Klux Klan holding a conference on "Race Relations in America," limiting the attendance to its members, and boasting about the virtues of "freedom of expression."

You should also be aware that "Armenian genocide" is a controversial issue among the scholars, a fact pointed out by none other than the highest human rights organization in Europe, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), in its ruling on the Switzerland-Perinçek case in 2013, and again in 2015.

In 1985, for example, 69 U.S. historians and researchers, among them the eminent historian Bernard Lewis, passed a unanimous resolution, addressed to members of the U.S. House of Representatives and published in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, refuting Armenian genocide allegations. These were academicians specializing in Turkish, Ottoman and Middle Eastern studies. Many of these academicians were subsequently harassed or intimidated by the pro-genocide camp. In 2011 124 Turkish academicians signed a statement supporting the 1985 declaration.

The controversial aspect of the 1915 events in Ottoman Anatolia being indisputable, what gives the right to MESA to ignore the contra-genocide views and exclude from the WATS conferences those academicians that are in this camp?

Are you the God's chosen arbiter on historical truth?

If it is any consolation for you, however, MESA is not the only organization or institution in America to have such overtly prejudicial stance on "Armenian genocide." We know the so-called "International Association of Genocide Scholars," a biased group that, over the years, has treated contra-genocide scholars like the plague that must be avoided, and universities such as the UCLA where the anti-Turk sentiment is so strong that the now-deceased history professor Stanford Shaw was not only bullied, but was forced to retire early from the university in 1992 after his house was bombed by Armenian hoodlums.

Prof. Shaw's "crime" was that he did not subscribe to the Armenian narrative of the 1915 events.

We also know institutions who have prostituted themselves under the banner of academic scholarship to promote exclusively pro-Armenian genocide studies so as to attract donations from Armenian sources. If you try to argue for independent research in these institutions, they will think you are speaking in Chinese.

What is perhaps equally disgraceful, some academic institutions have caved in to anti-Turkish Armenian pressure and obstructionism when invited speakers are prevented from giving presentations on Turkish history even on a topic that is remotely related to "Armenian genocide." <http://www.turkishny.com/english-news/5-english-news/229713-academic-freedom-incident-at-california-university-on-aturk-talk-reminder-of-sordid-past>.

Separate from the above issue of ingrained prejudice, rooted in religion and ethnicity, I need not belabor here to explain why the "Armenian genocide" is a fiction, why the Ottoman government had no intent to harm the Armenian refugees during Relocation, that it was merely an intercommunal strife, why the so-called "Andonian files" and the infamous "Hitler Quote" are fakes, why "Ambassador Morgenthau's Story" lacks any credibility, why the claimed killing of 1.5 million Armenian refugees by Ottoman Turks is an obscene exaggeration, how the Armenian narrative of the 1915 events shamelessly ignores the

massacre of more than half a million civilian Muslim (and Jewish) victims at the hands of renegade Armenian bands during 1910-1922, what the 1923 Hovannes Katchznouni Manifesto says, what the 1919-1921 Malta Tribunal signifies, why the US Senate in June 1920 rejected the "American Mandate for Armenia" based on General James G. Harbord's report post visit to the war zone, and why the 1923 Lausanne Treaty ended Armenian aspirations for "Greater Armenia."

Nor do I need to remind you of the Dashnak/Nazi collaboration in WW-II, the post-war ASALA/JCAG Armenian terror perpetrated against Turkish diplomats, the Khojaly Massacre, and how the well-funded, well-organized Armenian lobby in North America – relying in part on Diaspora-funded, Hollywood-created extravaganza - distorts historical facts and gains support in the media and among the politicians, with no retrospection, no debate, and no questions asked – all the while creating ethnic strife and animosity feeding de facto racism in the society.

I will be more direct on one particular topic, however: The 1948 UN Convention on Genocide. Article VI of this Convention stipulates that the crime of genocide must be established by a competent tribunal, requiring a court verdict. It is the standard in international law that is acknowledged and elucidated by the ECHR in the Switzerland-Perinçek landmark case in 2013 and 2015, and again by France's Constitutional Council in 2016. Under this Convention individuals, parliaments, governments and the establishments such as MESA do not have the authority to pass judgment on genocide.

Yet, there exists no court verdict on "Armenian genocide." None whatsoever. (In this context, you may wonder why Armenia has not taken its case to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, as Croatia did in 1999 against Serbia. You may be surprised when you read the court's verdict).

That being the case, attributing to Turks the odious crime of genocide in connection with the 1915 events is wrong, and should be called what it is: gross injustice, and willful character assassination. Such defamatory charges cannot be condoned.

The crime of genocide is enshrined in and governed by international law. We live in a society of laws, and we must respect the laws, including international laws. No excuses.

You will understand, I hope, why Turks are so indignant and resentful when they are wrongly accused of "Armenian genocide." It is like adding insult to injury when such accusations are levied in the context of human rights, and the treasonous acts of Armenians in time of war and the atrocities committed by their renegade militias against the local civilian population are disgracefully overlooked.

And that is why, in some circles in Turkey, there has been an outcry of protests when an entity such as MESA organizes an international WATS conference not far from its borders, freely accusing Turks of "genocide," welcoming Turkish academicians that are willing to participate in the Turk-bashing orgy, and yet excluding Turks that understandably want to express their views, defend their heritage – and the truth as they see it.

What Turks really expect is decency in historical discourse.

As for certain Turkish academicians in Turkey that are the focus of your complaint, I do not know to what extent your accusations of them being harassed by their universities or Turkey's Council of Higher Education (YÖK) are correct. I would argue that academicians should normally be free to say and write what they want. I would also argue, however, that

such academicians should not expect a green pass to conferences on foreign soil when their research is funded by outside sources that promote "Armenian genocide." The Konrad Adenauer Foundation, for example, is one such foreign source. Research findings from such studies are inherently tainted, and the incestuous relationship between the researcher and his/her financial supporter, involving a *quid pro quo*, should be condemned.

I am sure you are well aware how certain academicians with Turkish names are well-feted and admired in North American institutions that receive funding from Armenian sources. No names need be given.

Further, academic engagement does not impart unbridled license to a person to unjustly defame his/her nation; nor does it insulate that person from criticism.

So, Professor Baron and Dr. Newhall, before you complain to Turkish authorities about the harassment of certain Turkish scholars regarding attending the WATS conferences, I suggest you first mend your house, as it were, and open these conferences to scholars on both sides of the aisle.

That way you will promote scholarship and academic freedom, put your foot where your mouth is, and gain respectability. There is no good substitute for a free exchange of views and information.

I would also suggest, if I may, that you refrain from using pejorative epithets such as "ultra-nationalist," "right-wing," and "genocide denier" in referring to Turkish intellectuals, e.g., Dr. Doğu Perinçek, who do not subscribe to your version of history. Such language does not sit well with your positions. How would you, yourself, like to be called "ultra-liberal," "extremist," "genocide accuser," etc?

Yours sincerely,

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Post script: Copy of this letter was subsequently sent (by e-mail) to the Turkish, EU, UN, European Council and US officials that were cc'd in MESA's September 15, 2017 original letter.