



By Ferruh
DEMIRMEN, Ph.D.

IGNORING HISTORY AND SNUBBING LAW, DUTCH PARLIAMENT RECOGNIZES

“ARMENIAN GENOCIDE”

The lower House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer) of the Netherlands approved a motion on February 22nd to recognize “Armenian genocide” relating to the 1915 events in Ottoman Anatolia. The decision was taken ostensibly for “moral reasons.”

Considering the solemnity of their decision, one would think that the morally motivated Dutch parliamentarians would have taken time to debate the issue. But that, evidently, was not the case. The parliamentarians officially took only 6 days to reach their decision.

Solid support

The vote on the motion in the 150-member parliament was 142 in favor and 3 against. So, the support for the motion was overwhelming.

Both the ruling and opposition parties backed the motion. The three nay votes came from the Denk (“Turkish”) party.

Comparing the voting with that in the Bundestag, where the “Armenian genocide” motion was approved in 2016 with 153 in favor, 1 against, and 1 abstention, but with only 156 members out of total 640 participating in voting, the relative support for the genocide motion in the Dutch Parliament was far greater than that in the German Parliament.

Likewise, when the French lawmakers adopted “Armenian genocide” in 2011, the relative support both in the National Assembly and the Senate was much lower.

Why, then, such strong pro-Armenian, anti-Turkish sentiment in the Dutch Parliament? It is most likely that such sentiment stems



from the country's turn to a relatively conservative mindset in reaction to extremist Islam activities in Europe in recent years (e.g., the growing popularity of the anti-Islam, anti-immigrant Dutch politician Geert Wilders). Traditionally, Dutch people are known for their tolerant and liberal outlook.

The Turk-bashing frenzy of recognizing the "Armenian genocide" in the Austrian, Luxembourg, German and Czech parliaments recently may have also influenced the Dutch vote.

Whether and to what extent the currently highly strained relations between Turkey and the Netherlands, and the unfortunate "Fascists, Nazi remnants" epithet directed at the Dutch, had a role, is a matter of speculation.

Whatever the reason, however, Dutch politicians should know that

recognizing the "Armenian genocide," amounts to a pronouncement that the Ottoman Turks were guilty of a heinous crime, and is a pretty serious undertaking. The Armenian question is a complex historical issue with underlying legal ramifications. How conscious or knowledgeable were the Dutch politicians vis-à-vis their solemn responsibility? Not much, it appears.

Sidelining history

Regarding history, did the Dutch politicians know that the "Armenian genocide" is baseless because the Ottoman government had no intent to harm the Armenian refugees during the 1915 Relocation, that the event was merely an inter-communal strife, that the so-called "Andonian files" and the infamous "Hitler Quote" are fakes, that "Ambassador Morgenthau's Story" lacks credibility, that the

claimed killing of 1.5 million Armenian refugees by Ottoman Turks is an obscene exaggeration, and that 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 Armenian revolutionaries during 1910-1922?

What about the 1923 Manifesto of Hovannes Katchznouni and the 1919-1921 Malta Tribunal? – two topics the genocide proponents diligently avoid?

We can also safely assume that the Dutch politicians knew nothing about the *Algemeen Handelsblad* article of May 25th, 1920, where the war correspondent, in alluding to the inter-communal warfare ravishing Anatolia, and observing that "there are two sides to every truth" describes how the stories coming from the war zone are twisted in



the West in favor of the Armenians due to religious prejudice, and how he witnessed “Turkish settlements ... killed down to the last man ... in a bestial form.”

Snubbing law

But the “Armenian genocide” allegations are not just about history. In rushing to judgment, Dutch parliamentarians have ignored the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide, with its stipulation that the crime of genocide can only be established by a competent court.

There is no court verdict on the “Armenian genocide.” None.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), in its 2013 and 2015 rulings on the *Switzerland v. Perinçek* case, and France’s Constitutional Council, in its January 2016 decision, recalled the controversial aspect of “Armenian genocide,” making a distinction between the Armenian claims and the court-proven Holocaust, and underlining

that parliaments - and governments, municipalities, etc. - have no authority to pass judgment on the crime of genocide.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) also reminded us, in its 2015 *Croatian v. Serbia* decision, that for a violation to be called genocide, there must be specific intent (*dolus specialis*). Mere harm or killing cannot be called genocide. The specific intent factor cannot be proven for the 1915 events in Anatolia. What can be proven, in fact, is just the opposite.

Given these facts, one must ask: What led the erudite Dutch parliamentarians to ignore these judicial rulings in their rush to judgment? Politicians can perhaps be forgiven for their ignorance of history. But what about the legal underpinnings?

It is bitterly ironic that the Dutch politician Joel Voordewind, who introduced the genocide motion in

the parliament, and who, boasting, “Our country houses the capital of international law after all,” played the guardian-angel of law, sadly deserted all pretenses of deference to law when the right moment came. Yes, the ICJ is in The Hague, and the Strasbourg-based ECHR is not far away.

Dutch parliamentarians should also ponder why the Armenian side, instead of peddling its genocide claims incessantly, does not take its case to a tribunal of law. What is the Armenian side afraid of? Archival evidence?

Hypocrisy

The Dutch Parliament’s vote also brought forth hypocrisy on the part of the Dutch government. Well aware of the judicial imperatives, the Dutch government ostensibly took the high ground and declared that the parliament’s decision is not binding on the government, and that it would not formally recog-

nize “genocide.” “The government would show restraint,” said a Foreign Ministry spokesperson.

How convenient. Are we to assume that the executive and legislative branches in the Netherlands do not speak to each other? Do they live on different planets?

Certainly there must have been talks between the two branches before the parliamentary vote, and the government knew what was to transpire. After all, the PM Mark Rutte’s own party in the parliament, People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), fully supported the genocide motion.

Interestingly, the German government took the same “not me” posture when the Bundestag recognized the “Armenian genocide.” When it comes to the Armenian question, evidently there is no shortage of hypocrisy.

And given his posture when he visited Bosnia in June 2015, Pope Francis, the paragon of rectitude, is no exception.

The Dutch government also made it known that as per the supplementary motion adopted by parliament, a high-level official would attend Armenia’s genocide remembrance day on April 24th. It dutifully added, however, that this attendance should not be taken as recognition of “Armenian genocide.”

How sincere is such statement? Certainly, a visit like this would mean tacit recognition of “Armenian genocide.”

Conclusion

With history far from their forte, and with a cavalier attitude towards the law, in recognizing “Armenian genocide” the Dutch parliamentari-



ans, like their other European colleagues before them, failed dismally in embracing justice and fairness.

Have these politicians ever given consideration how their action, vilifying Turks, would impact the 485,000 people of Turkish origin in the Netherlands?

And have they given any thought to Armenian JCAG/ASALA terrorism that took the lives of more than 70 innocent people including 40 Turkish diplomats in the 1970s through 1990s? Three of these terror acts took place on Dutch soil.

The allegation of “Armenian genocide” has no historical and legal basis, and the recognition granted to such allegation is no more than the product of Armenian propaganda driven by ethnic and religious prejudice, even hatred, feeding on anti-Turkish, anti-Islam rhetoric.

Is it a mere coincidence that the chief champion of the genocide motion in the Dutch parliament,

Mr. Voordewind, is a member of the Christian Union party (CU), an evangelical Protestant group that bases its policies on Bible? Can one say religion has played no role in the parliament’s voting?

After all, when the Armenian side pushes for recognition of “genocide”, it never fails to mention that Armenians were the “First Christian Nation.”

The Dutch politicians should have also been more prudent when they voted on the genocide resolution. It brought back the memories of the Srebrenica massacres in 1995 as a Dutch battalion under UN command stood by passively. The Srebrenica massacres have been officially designated genocide.

What should Turkey do about such unfounded charges? A good start, it appears, is to take the “genocide” resolutions to the UN or ECHR and seek their annulment.

An effective campaign to educate the domestic and foreign public, followed by the construction of a memorial, perhaps in the city of Van, dedicated to the memory of more than half a million Muslims that perished at the hands of Armenian revolutionaries during the WWI era, should be the next step.

And finally, if the Dutch parliamentarians had a genuine concern for humanity, they could have remembered the Khojaly massacre on its 26th anniversary. Committed by Armenian armed forces in 1992, the event was a modern-day pogrom and ethnic cleansing of horrific cruelty, resulting in the killing of at least 613 Azeri civilians, including 106 women and 63 children. ■