

A vindictive U.S. House recognizes “Armenian genocide” that has no credibility

By Ferruh Demirmen, Ph.D.

When the U.S. House of Representatives passed “Armenian genocide” resolution (H.Res.296) on October 29, 2019, the Armenian lobby and its supporters declared a victory of sorts. In an opinion article published the same day in *The NY Times*, the long-time advocate of “Armenian genocide,” Samantha Power, a former U.S. ambassador to the UN, declared the recognition was long overdue.

But there was no explanation as to why the House had waited for 35 years to pass such a resolution. A similar bill, H.Res.220, introduced in the House in March 2017 languished in the House Foreign Relations Committee despite relentless efforts to have it passed by the Armenian lobby. At the end, what the Armenian side received from the passage of H.Res.296 was more publicity; but it was a Pyrrhic victory devoid of substance.

The ready excuse

The fact is, the passing of H.Res.296 had little to do with the credibility of “Armenian genocide.” The resolution was a convenient excuse to punish Turkey due to the tension between the U.S. and Turkey on the Syrian conflict, in particular as regards the Kurdish militant group SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces) established in 2013. The air was so toxic for Turkey in the House that the bill passed overwhelmingly with 405 to 11 votes. Even the 94 members of the 103 House Turkish Caucus voted “yes” for the bill. There was not even a pretense of debate on the dead-serious allegations contained in the resolution. An orgy of Turkey-bashing was on play. The Armenian lobby and its supporters relished the development.

In reality, most of the fury in the House was directed at Turkey’s president Tayyip Erdoğan whose popularity in the U.S. Congress had reached very low levels. But for the frustrated politicians that did not matter. Turks were the bad guys; the SDF, allied with the U.S., were the good guys.

What was overlooked was that the SDF is composed largely of YPG, a Kurdish terrorist organization in Syria. In a U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on April 28, 2016, Defense Secretary Ash Carter admitted that YPG is affiliated with the PKK. Senator Lindsey Graham commented heatedly that the U.S. partnership with the Syrian Kurds was “the dumbest idea in the world.” (See photo).

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4591976/user-clip-def-sec-carter-us-backed-syrian-kurdish-group-shares-ties-terror-group-pkk>.

Here is an extract from the question-and-answer session between Sen. Graham and Sec. Carter:

Graham: *Secretary Carter, have you ever heard of the PYD?*

Carter: *I have, yes.*

Graham: *Who are they?*

Carter: *They are a Kurdish group, ... one of several ...*

Graham: *Have you heard of the YPG.*

Carter: *Yes, I have heard of them also.*

Graham: *Aren't they the military wing of the PYD?*

Carter: *They are, yes.*

Graham: *They are the leftist-Syrian Kurdish political party founded in 2013. Reports indicate that they are aligned with, or at least have substantial ties to, the PKK. Is that true?*

Carter: *O, yes, that is true.*



Sen. Lindsey Graham and Defense Secretary Ash Carter, U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, April 28, 2016.

Also in early 2016 the U.S. National Counter-Terrorism Center (NCTC) website stated that PKK's affiliate in Syria is PYD, and PYD's militant wing YPG cooperates with the PKK in carrying out terror attacks against the people of Turkey. Subsequently the page carrying this information was removed from the NCTC website.

How things had changed over 3 years! There is a red alert in Turkey for the arrest of "General" Mazola Kabana Abdi, the head of YPG.

All of this against the backdrop that Turkey is a critical member of NATO, is a partner in the Afghan war, and that Turkish soldiers had paid dearly with their lives (751 deaths, 21,000 wounded) alongside American troops in Korea from 1950 to 1971.

No backing by history

But back to the Armenian allegations. Notwithstanding all the publicity behind it, "Armenian genocide" is not an established fact. Hundreds of historians, e.g., the declaration signed by 69 U.S. historians and published in *The NY Times* and *The Washington Post* in 1985, do not consider the 1915 events in Ottoman Anatolia genocide. The UN has also not recognized "Armenian genocide."

One wonders if the members of the Congress are really informed about the 1915 events. How many of them know that Turks welcomed Jews that were persecuted during the Spanish inquisition in the 15th century, helped mass-starving Irish people by sending shiploads of food during the 1845-1849 Great Famine, and rescued thousands of Jews from the Nazi terror during WW-II? Could such people really commit the odious act of genocide against a minority which it embraced for 6 centuries and considered a “loyal nation”?

In contrast, as revealed in German magazine “*Mitteilungsblatt*” in 1939, Dashnak Armenians collaborated with the Nazis during World War II.

Every accusatory remark contained in H.Res.296, e.g., the obscene claim of 1.5 million Armenians deaths, the alleged Hitler document containing the fake “Armenian commentary” that was not even accepted as evidence at the Nuremberg trials, the ramblings of the utterly racist, Turk- and Muslim-hater Ambassador Henry Morgenthau (Turks “primitive,” possessing “poisonous blood”), can be countered one by one.

It was a major war in 1915; Armenians had started a massive insurgency movement, joining with the invading Russian army, and the Ottoman government had little choice but relocate Armenians in Eastern Anatolia to the south. Armenians in special situations and those in the rest of Anatolia stayed put. Disease, chaos and famine took their toll during relocation. Some rogue provincial officials that were also responsible for the killings of Armenians were subsequently tried and, including the death penalty, punished by the Ottoman courts.

The opportunism and miscalculation of the Armenian revolutionaries was revealed by none other than Hovannes Katchznouni, the First Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, in the his Manifesto delivered at the April 1923 Dashnak convention in Bucharest, Romania.

Probably the most deplorable or condemnable aspect of the Armenian narrative is its omission. The massacre of some 520,000 civilian Muslims in Anatolia at the hands of armed Armenian militia is almost never mentioned in the Western media. Eastern Anatolia is full of Muslim mass graves.

No legal foundation

Equally important, “Armenian genocide” has no legal foundation. The 1948 UN Convention on Genocide gives the authority to judge the crime of genocide to a competent tribunal that has such jurisdiction. All genocides officially recognized by the United Nations, e.g., the Srebrenica and Cambodian genocides, have had the determination by such tribunal. Individuals, governments and parliaments do not have the authority to judge genocide.

Subsequent decisions by the European Court of Human Rights and France’s Constitutional Council have rejected the genocide narrative for the 1915 events in Ottoman Anatolia. These courts have also ruled out any similarity between the Holocaust and the 1915 events.

Interestingly, H.Res.296, or the twin bill S.Res.150 in the Senate, does not say a word about the legal underpinnings of “Armenian genocide.”

By affirming “Armenian genocide,” the House not only ignored the right to due process guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution, it strayed away from the legislative task and put its stamp of approval on an assertion that has no legal backing. The House’s action was also a testimony to the way “Armenian genocide” has been politicized and used as a political tool.

If the Armenian side is genuinely interested in pursuing its allegations, it should either engage in scholarly dispute with the Turkish side or take its case to the European Court of Justice. It does neither; instead, it prefers to cozy up to politicians to push its agenda. This way it gains publicity; but in substance, its victory is hollow.

If it weren’t for the Syrian conflict, there is little chance that H.Res.296 would have passed.

Sam Weems, the late Arkansas judge who authored the book, *“Armenia: Secrets of a ‘Christian’ Terrorist State”* (2002), characterized Armenian genocide claims “as bogus as a three-dollar bill.”

Hypocrisy exposed and recalled

The developments on H.Res.296 exposed one hypocrisy and recalled another. The fact that *The NY Times* published Samantha Power’s opinion piece on the same day that the resolution passed in the House is telling something. That kind of “speed” is unusual in journalism. It suggests that *The Times* was not only eager to publicize the House resolution, it had made a prior arrangement with Power to that effect.

What is even more striking is that, *The Times* refused to publish an opinion piece that was submitted by this author as a rebuttal to Power’s article. The newspaper didn’t even bother to respond on this matter.

Yet, at the end of Power’s piece, there was this self-commendatory statement by the newspaper: *“The Times is committed to publishing a diversity of letters to the editor.”* What a hypocrisy!

But that wasn’t all; there was also a reminder of a past hypocrisy. In a presentation she gave at the Baker Institute (of Rice University) in Houston in 2006, Power, a “truth-teller,” sermonized about “Armenian genocide.” She holds a doctorate degree in law. At the end of her talk, organized by the institute director Edward Djerejian, the few Turks present in the audience were not allowed to ask her questions. Soon afterwards Power was sent a written invitation by Turks to debate, at a time and location of her choice, the 1915 Armenian events with a scholar from the Turkish side. She declined, replying, “Turks are too sensitive” on the issue.

“Too sensitive”? So much about her devotion to scholarship and truth.

And so much about being open to “diversity of opinion” in the American media outlets such as *The NY Times*. Based on previous experiences, anti-Turkish, anti-Muslim bias in the Western media is alive and well. After all, as the Armenian lobby reminds us every often, Armenians were the “First Christian nation”!