

HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION ISTANBUL BRANCH PRESS RELEASE

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Today, 24th of April, is worldwide recognised as the date signifying the Armenian Genocide. Only in Turkey it indicates a taboo. The Turkish state mobilises all its resources to deny the meaning of this date. .

At diplomatic platforms Turkish officials and their advocates claim that they recognise the “big tragedy” and they only object to its being named as a “Genocide”. That’s not true. At every occasion in Turkey not only the Armenian Genocide, but also the great agony of the Armenian people is denied and attempts are made to justify the genocide.

It was only last month that during a Symposium on the Armenian-Turkish relations the denialist official theses were voiced one after another, offending the Armenians in Turkey and elsewhere and insulting the memory of their grandparents. Lies were told in the name of “science”., like “Armenians have always sold their masters”, “deportation was a means of crisis management”, “death toll of deportation is comparable to the death toll of flu epidemic in England that time”, “there is no other people as noble as the Turkish nation in the world, it is impossible for them to commit a genocide”, and many more, humiliating a people who was one of the most advanced in science, art, literature, and in all other aspects.

Denial is an constituent part of the genocide itself and results in the continuation of the genocide. Denial of genocide is a human rights violation in itself. It deprives individuals the right to mourn for their ancestors, for the ethnic cleansing of a nation, the annihilation of people of all ages, all professions, all social sections, women, men, children, babies, grandparents alike just because they were Armenians regardless of their political background or conviction. Perhaps the most important of all, it is the refusal of making a solemn, formal commitment and say “NEVER AGAIN”.

Turkey has made hardly any progress in the field of co-existence, democracy, human rights and putting an end to militarism since the time of the Union and Progress Committee. Annihilation and denial had been and continues today to be the only means to solve the problem. Villages evacuated and put on fire and forced displacements are still the manifestation of the same habit of “social engineering”. There has always been bloodshed in the homeland of Armenians after 1915. Unsolved murders, disappearances under custody, rapes and arrests en masse during the 1990’s were no surprise, given the ongoing state tradition lacking any culture of repentance for past crimes against humanity.

Similarly the removal of a public prosecutor and banning him from profession just for taking the courage to mention an accusation against the military, a very recent incident, is the manifestation of an old habit of punishing anybody who dares to voice any objection to the army. And today’s ongoing military build up of some 250,000 troops in the southeast of

Turkey is the proof of a mindset who is unable to develop any solution to the Kurdish question other than armed suppression.

Turkey will not be able to take even one step forward without putting an end to the continuity of the Progress and Union manner of ruling. No human rights violation can be stopped in Turkey and there will be no hope of breaking the vicious circle of Kurdish uprisings and their bloody suppression unless the Turkish state agree to create an environment where public homage is paid to genocide victims, where the sufferings of their grandchildren is shared and the genocide is recognised.

Today we, as the human rights defenders, would like to address all Armenians in Turkey and elsewhere in the world and tell them “we want to share the pain in your hearts and bow down before the memory of your lost ones. They are also our losses. Our struggle for human rights in Turkey, is at the same time our mourning for our common losses and a homage paid to the genocide victims”.