

February 6, 2009

**The Honorable Barack H. Obama**  
**President of the United States of America**

Dear Mr. President,

As presidents of Turkish American community organizations nationwide, we congratulate you on assuming the Presidency of the United States of America. We wish you success in confronting the many daunting challenges facing our nation and the world today.

We would be remiss in our obligations and rights as United States citizens, however, to neglect to highlight a stumbling block in restoring America's standing abroad.

It would be stating the obvious to observe that Armenian special interest lobbies are pressuring your Administration and Congress to label the tragic events in the waning hours of the Ottoman Empire during World War I as the crime of genocide. To dispute the characterization as unsubstantiated by the weight of reliable evidence is not to withhold sympathy from Armenians and others, including Ottoman Muslims, who also suffered harrowing casualties during World War I. And to accept this one-sided characterization unilaterally by ignoring independent and impartial assessments by Middle East historians and scholars would be both grossly unfair and potentially incendiary to Southeast Europe, the Caucasus and the Middle East.

History is replete with examples of false narratives born from bigotries that advance a political agenda rather than the truth. The Armenian claim of passive victimhood stands on such shaky historical footing. The attached partial list of scholars should demonstrate that, at the very least, the question of whether to apply the term genocide or not divides the scholarly community. Many reputable scholars, mainly historians of the Ottoman Empire, World War I and the Middle East have refrained from applying the term to describe the tragic civilian losses suffered in the early 20th century in the Ottoman Empire. Their work also diverges from, in many cases contradicts, the historical narrative from which descends the charge of genocide.

To quarrel with a genocide characterization—the crime of crimes, which requires exacting standards of proof as required by solemn treaty obligations and constitutional due process—is not to deny lesser crimes or atrocities. In fact, the Ottoman government itself prosecuted and convicted nearly 1,400 individuals, executing scores, including a provincial governor, for crimes committed against Armenians. On the other hand, the equally well documented massacres and ethnic cleansing of Ottoman Muslims in Eastern Anatolia committed directly or assisted by Armenian rebels, which were acknowledged by independent observers, are routinely ignored or denied today.

The number of Armenians who died in the World War I years and their causes can at best be conjectured; and, conjectures are not legally admissible evidence. Scholars in Ottoman history generally agree that the Armenian deaths resulted from a multiplicity of causes: inter-communal warfare, the conditions of the forced relocations, murder, famine, disease, deficient medical care and austere conditions of life during wartime. The fact remains that there is no reliable assessment of the Armenian death toll or its categorization according to causation.

Further, contrary to assertions made by Armenian proponents, scholars in Ottoman history would also generally agree that there is no record of Ottoman Muslim animosity towards Armenians based on religion or ethnicity. Many Armenians in fact served at the highest echelons of the Ottoman government and the Ottoman parliament.

Few people throughout history, separated by ethnicity and religion, have shared such peaceful co-existence and developed such cultural affinity, as Turks and Armenians have for over 900 years under the Seljuk and Ottoman administrations. Nothing we argue in this letter should be construed as an effort to diminish the loss of innocent Armenian lives. We mourn their losses as ours and hope they too will find it in their hearts to mourn for our ancestors.

Mr. President,

Your Inaugural address proclaimed an era of responsibility. Turkey has shown such responsibility with respect to this contentious issue. It has voiced willingness to accept the findings by an international commission of scholars and experts with access to all relevant archives, including those of Armenian organizations that remain closed today. Armenia should be urged equally to accept the formation and conclusions of such a commission. We see such an effort as the fairest method for assessing the truth, which will pave the way for reconciliation, in lieu of politically charged legislative or executive decisions by third parties.

On behalf of Turkish Americans nationwide, we thank you for your consideration of our views and concerns and extend once again our congratulations and best wishes for your success.

(Signatory list as attached)

## **Signatories List**

SIGNED BY (as of February 5, 2009)  
(Signatures on File)

Niyazi Ozkiroglu  
**American Association of Crimean Turks**

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**American Turkish Association of Houston**

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**American Turkish Association of Indiana**

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**American Turkish Association of Washington, DC**

Tayfun Selen  
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Ali Nasibov  
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**Balkan Turks of America Association**

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**Istanbul University Alumni Association of USA**

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Timur Edib  
**Maryland American Turkish Association**

Ilhan Bayram  
**Mevlana Mosque Association**

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**Middle East Technical University Alumni Association**

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**North Florida Turkish American Cultural Association**

Atilla Soran  
**Pittsburgh Turkish American Association**

Gokhan Gelisen  
**Society of Turkish American Architects, Engineers and Scientists, Inc.**

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**Southern New England Turkish American Cultural Association**

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**Turkish American Chamber of Restaurateurs**

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**Turkish American Community Center**

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**Turkish American Cultural Alliance of Chicago**

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**Turkish American Cultural Association of Michigan**

Sevket Acar  
**Turkish American Cultural Society of Colorado**

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**Turkish American Cultural Association of Georgia**

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**Turkish American Youth Association**

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**Turkish Coalition of America**

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**Turkish Cultural Alliance Inc., NY Hars Birligi**

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**Turkish Cypriot Aid Society**

Mehmet Hassan  
**Turkish Cypriot Cultural and Educational Association**

Mesut Vardar  
**Turkish Society of Rochester**

Begum Dinlec  
**Turkish Women's League of America, Inc.**

Ferit Demirbulakli  
**Turkocagi, Inc.**

Fatih Demirci  
**United American Muslim Association of New York**

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**Young Turks Cultural Aid Society**

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**The notion that “Most Western Scholars” consider the Ottoman-Armenian tragedy as “Genocide” is untrue.**

Below is a partial listing of scholars, who have refrained from applying the genocide label to the events of 1915 or whose work exposes parts of the traditional “Armenian Genocide” narrative as significantly flawed.

#####

**Batkay, Timothy**, Associate Professor of Political Science, Montclair State University

**Childs, Timothy** (dec.), former Professor of Ottoman History, Johns Hopkins University

**Courbage, Youssef**, Researcher, National Institute of Demographic Studies, Paris, France. Author of *Christians and Muslims under Islam* (1992), Fayard Press

**Cuthell, David C.**, Executive Director of the Institute of Turkish Studies and Associate Professor of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University

**Davison, Roderic** (dec.), former Professor of Ottoman and Turkish history, George Washington University. Author of *Turkey: A Short History* (1998), Eothen Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition

**Duben, Alan**, Professor of History, Istanbul Bilgi University

**Dumont, Paul**, Chairman of Turcology Department, March Bloch University, Strasbourg, France. Author of *Mustapha Kemal invents modern Turkey* (2006), Complex Press

**Dunér, Bertil**, former Senior Researcher, The Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Stockholm, Sweden.

**Dyer, Gwynne**, Military Historian and Journalist, Author of *Turkish 'Falsifiers' and Armenian 'Deceivers': Historiography and the Armenian Massacres*, Middle Eastern Studies 12 (1976)

**Erickson, Edward J.**, Author and Researcher, Birmingham University, Retired Lieutenant-Colonel (U.S. Army), Author of *Ordered To Die, A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War* (2000), Greenwood Press

**Fargues, Philippe**, Member, National Institute of Demographic Studies, Paris, France. Author of *Christians and Muslims under Islam* (1992), Fayard Press

**Fromkin, David**, Professor of International Relations, History, and Law, Boston University. Author of *A Peace To End All Peace* (1989), Avon Books

**Georgeon, François**, Senior researcher, (CNRS) National Center for Scientific Research, Paris, France. Author of *Histoire de l'Empire Ottoman*, (1989) Fayard

**Gunter, Michael M.**, Professor of Political Science, Tennessee Technical University. Author of “*Pursuing the Just Cause of Their People*”: *A Study of Contemporary Armenian Terrorism* (1986), Greenwood Press

**Hurewitz, Jacob Coleman** (dec.), former Professor of Middle Eastern Politics, Columbia University. Author of *Middle East Politics: The Military Dimension* (1982), Westview Press

**Jäckel, Eberhard**, Professor Emeritus of Modern World History, Stuttgart University

**Levy, Avigdor**, Professor of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, Brandeis University. Author of *Jews, Turks, and Ottomans: A Shared History* (2002), Syracuse University Press

**Lewis, Bernard**, Professor Emeritus of Middle Eastern History, Princeton University. Author of *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (1961), Oxford University Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition

**Lewy, Guenter**, Professor Emeritus of Middle Eastern History, Massachusetts University. Author of *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide* (2007), University of Utah Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition

**Lowry, Heath**, M. Kemal Atatürk Professor of Ottoman and Modern Turkish Studies, Princeton University. Author of *The Story Behind ‘Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story’* (1990), Isis Press

**Mango, Andrew**, Author, Historian and Researcher, University of London. Author of *Ataturk: The Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey* (2002), Overlook TP and *The Turks Today* (2004), Overlook TP

**Mantran, Robert**, (dec.) Former Professor of Turcology, University of Aix-Marseille, France. Author of *History of Turkey* (1993), University Presses of France

**McCarthy, Justin**, Professor of History, University of Louisville. Author of *The Armenian Rebellion at Van* (2006), University of Utah Press and *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire* (1983), New York University Press

**Nora, Pierre**, former Professor of Contemporary History, The School of High Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS, Paris), Member of the French academy, Paris, France



**Oberling, Pierre**, Professor of Ethnology, Hunter College, CUNY.

**Rémond René** (dec.), former president, The National Foundation of Political Sciences. Author of *Les Droites en France* (1982), Aubier Montaigne

**Roux, Jean-Paul**, Former Director of Research (CNRS), National Center for Scientific Research, Paris, France. Author of *Mustapha Kemal Ataturk and New Turkey* (1982), Maisonneuve et Larose

**Rustow, Dunkwart A.** (dec.), former Distinguished Professor of History, CUNY Graduate School. Author of *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey* (1964), Princeton University Press

**Salt, Jeremy**, Visiting Associate Professor, Bilkent University. Author of *Imperialism, Evangelism and the Ottoman Armenians 1878-1896* (1993), Routledge Press and *The Unmaking of the Middle East* (2006), University of California Press

**Shaw, Stanford J.** (dec.), former Professor of Ottoman and Turkish History, UCLA. Author of *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* (1977), Cambridge University Press and *From Empire to Republic: The Turkish War of National Liberation, 1918-1923* (2001) Turkish Historical Society

**Stone, Norman**, Professor of International Relations, Bilkent University. Author of *World War I, A Short History* (2008), Penguin Books and *Eastern Front: 1914-1917* (2004, 2nd Edition), Penguin Global

**Strachan, Hew**, Professor of Contemporary History, Oxford University. Author of *The First World War* (2004), Viking Press

**Veinstein, Giles**, Professor of Turkish and Ottoman History, Collège de France. Author of *Government and Society in Ottoman 16<sup>th</sup> and 18th centuries* (1994), Variorum Press

**Wieviorka, Annette**, Senior Researcher (CNRS), National Center for Scientific Research, Paris, France

**Williams, Brian**, Associate Professor of History, University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth

**Yapp, Malcolm E.**, Professor Emeritus of History, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies

**Zarcone, Thierry**, Senior Researcher in Turkish history (CNRS), National Center for Scientific Research, Paris, France. Author of *Turkey: From Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Ataturk* (2005), Gallimard Press