



5-1-2014

After a Century of Injustice: Moving Toward Turkish Recognition of the Armenian Genocide

Ashley Kalagian Blunt

University of Winnipeg, a.blunt@uwinnipeg.ca

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Recommended Citation

Blunt, Ashley Kalagian (2014) "After a Century of Injustice: Moving Toward Turkish Recognition of the Armenian Genocide," *Peace and Conflict Studies*: Vol. 21 : No. 1 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/pcs/vol21/iss1/4>

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Author Bio(s)

Ashley Kalagian Blunt completed her Master of Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney, and currently teaches for the University of Winnipeg. She has lived and worked in Canada, South Korea, Peru, Mexico and Australia. Her research interests include genocide, diaspora, intercultural communication, and cultural identity. Email: a.blunt@uwinnipeg.ca



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Abstract

Nearly one hundred years have passed since the Armenian genocide, which prefaced and in some ways encouraged the Holocaust – yet the Turkish government continues to deny the genocide and uses political manipulation to prevent its recognition by others. The denial’s history has been one of collaborative repression, but in recent years Turkish voices have joined with Armenians’ in the struggle for recognition; collaborative struggle, particularly in recognition of shared history, may represent the best chance to pressure Turkey to federally recognize the genocide. This paper explores the machinations of the denial and its significance in the twenty-first century, as well as the consequences of the Armenian genocide for its victims and their descendants. As a global perspective drawn from Armenian diaspora studies demonstrates, the genocide remains a significant part of a global consciousness of pan-Armenian identity. This identity remains trapped as a victim of the genocide, just as the denial entraps Turkish identity.

Introduction

“Denial of genocide strives to reshape history into order to demonize the victims and rehabilitate the perpetrators, and is – indeed – the final stage of genocide” (Lipstadt in Balakian, 2003, p. 383). If we take denial to be the final phase of genocide, this means the Armenian genocide has continued for nearly a century, as this final phase has been inherited and continued by successive generations of Turkish politicians, whose efforts have become more aggressive in recent decades. In turn, members of Armenian communities, in Armenia itself, where approximately 3 million Armenians live, and in the diaspora as well, the scattered international communities of as many as 8 million Armenians, have worked to counter Turkey’s efforts, lobbying governments and international organizations to officially recognize the genocide. Despite some success, the Turkish denial continues, and continues to

have significance not solely for Armenian communities, but also all of humanity. This is particularly true because Turkish genocide denial sets a precedent and model, following in step with the genocide itself, which set the precedent for the Holocaust of World War II.

This article reviews the history of the Turkish government's denial of the Armenian genocide, including the methods and goals of the denial, and the impacts of the genocide and the denial on Armenians worldwide. Just as it argues that there has been a collaborative repression of historical truth, involving academics and foreign state governments, among others, it also argues that collaborative struggle between Armenian and Turkish activists, non-governmental organizations, and communities offers the best opportunity to achieve Armenian genocide recognition in Turkey based on recent events and the opportunity to continue building on their momentum.

The Armenian Genocide and Its Aftermaths

At the end of the nineteenth century, the greatly diminished Ottoman Empire was in the final stages of its decline. The Armenians, a Christian minority in the Muslim empire, were living on the traditional homelands they had occupied for over 2000 years. In the 1800s, the Ottoman Empire repeatedly went to war with Russia, a Christian empire, and lost much of its territory, including Bulgaria, Bosnia, Herzegovina (Balakian, 2003, p. 145), and the Balkans, largely Christian populations (p. 161). In response, the Ottoman government began to frame Christians as its enemies (p. 145). Thus, those Christians within the Ottoman Empire came under suspicion, in particular the Armenians (p. 198), as a large part of the Armenian community lay within Russia's borders. Armenians in what's now eastern Turkey suffered increasing attacks from Turkish mobs incited by official powers, the worst of these occurring from 1894 – 1896 (p. 5), and again in 1909 (Balakian, 1997, p. 232; Gibbons, 1917).

At the start of World War I, the Ottoman Empire aligned itself with Germany, and using the war as a guise, the Ottoman's new government, the Young Turk Committee for Union and Progress, enacted a policy of genocide against the empire's Armenian population, as well as Assyrian (Travis, 2006), Greek and other non-Muslim communities. The genocide officially started on April 24, 1915, when Armenian intellectuals, community and religious leaders in Istanbul were rounded up for interrogation, torture and execution (Balakian, 1997, p. 235). Persecution of Armenians with intent of extermination continued across Anatolia, what it today eastern Turkey, and then in the independent Republic of Armenia as Turkish forces continually invaded (Balakian, 1997, p. 242; 2003, p. 328). Aida Alayarian (2008) sets

the total number of Armenian deaths at over two million, including deaths from the pogroms and massacres that began in 1894 and continued until 1922 (p. 9).

Two key events after the genocide have had profound and lasting impact on Armenia and Armenians. One of these was the fate of the survivors. Their homelands became eastern Turkey: village names were changed and Armenian churches and monuments destroyed; even today, practically no Armenians live on this land (Hovannisian, R. K., 2003, p. 275). Some survivors fled east to what is now the Republic of Armenia, then under the protection of the Russian Empire and soon to be part of the Soviet Union. Others escaped and attempted to assemble the remains of their families and villages in communities scattered across the Middle East, Europe and North America. This formed the Armenian diaspora, which may number approximately eight million today. The population of Armenia itself is only three million (World Bank, n.d.). Studies of the diaspora have attested to a global, pan-Armenian identity, though, as a result of its wide dispersion, it exists in a necessarily fragmented and heterogeneous fashion (compare Bakalian, 1993; Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005; Kirkland, 1980a, 1980b; Schwalgin, 2004; Ziemer, 2009, 2010a, 2010b). Although few studies document the Armenian diaspora (Kaprielian-Churchill, 2005, p. xxvi), those completed indicate this collective diasporan Armenian identity is trapped as a victim of the genocide that created it. It is impossible to give any sense of Armenianness without serious consideration of the genocide; it is an inevitable part of modern Armenian identity (Theriault, 2003). This is particularly evident for the diaspora, which originally formed as a result of the genocide (Hovannisian, R., 2003).

Examining the major studies published in English allows insight into the lasting impact of the genocide on diasporan communities. One American study describes the genocide as the Armenian “overarching cultural narrative” and presents some of the difficulties that arise from limited cultural knowledge of identity due to genocide (Manoogian, Walker, & Richards, 2007). Ethnographic fieldwork conducted in an Armenian community in Russia has also provided key insights into Armenian diasporan-consciousness. There, Ulrike Ziemer found that the genocide remains a significant factor influencing Armenian identity, both in the sense of the personal family narrative as well as the diasporan “collective identity” (2010a, p. 295). In her study of tensions between descendants of genocide victims and recent Armenian migrants to Greece, Susanne Schwalgin (2004) emphasizes a contrast between an imagined “pure,” pre-genocide Armenia and the present-day, impoverished, post-Soviet Republic of Armenia. This contrast is an indication that in

many ways, the Armenian homeland of the diaspora no longer exists. In that sense Armenian diasporan longing for “homeland” may be, particularly for the older, original diasporan communities formed immediately after the genocide, a longing for both a place and time before genocide.

The genocide’s other significant and long-reaching consequence is the Turkish denial, described as “the most consistent, strident, and elaborate state-organized attempt to conceal a record of past atrocities” (Cohen, 2001 p. 134). During and after the genocide, the Young Turk government, and each consecutive Turkish government, claimed to be innocent of any wrongdoing. They institutionalised an official policy of denial that began in tandem with the genocide and continues through today (Balakian, 2003, epilogue). In Turkey, article 301 of the Turkish penal code makes it a federal crime to mention the unrecognized genocide because it is an insult to “Turkishness” (Alayarian, 2008, p. 137). Although the word “genocide” did not exist until World War II, witnesses and international media described the state-planned massacres using the same terminology that would come to define the crime (Balakian, 2003, p. xix). Despite this, Turkey maintains its denial, and “truths that were certain at the time ... were transformed into speculation, rumours, and uncertainties” (Cohen, 2001, p. 134). Denial is a typical criminal strategy to “promote forgetting” (Herman in Balakian 2003, p. 373). Prior to the 1970s, the denial was passive (Balakian, 2003, p. 379; Hovannisian, G., 2010, pp. 96, 114), but it has since become increasingly widespread, systematic and well-funded (Theriault, 2001). The Turkish government fuels the denial internationally by political manipulation and financial incentive. Through these means it has even gained the support of some academics (Hovannisian, R., 1997).

Denial has been described as the final phase of genocide and the desecration of historical memory (Hovannisian, R., 1999). Framed in this sense, the Armenian genocide has not officially ended, but is still actively carried on by Turkish government officials a century later. The individuals who died – often after suffering malicious violence including torture and rape (Balakian, (2003[1918]) and (Sarafin 2000[1916]) document the extreme violence employed, a typical aspect of genocide), and their centuries of cultural existence in the Ottoman Empire, are still under attack. This continued denial prevents Armenians from moving on in any way from the genocide. Diasporan Armenians advocate for recognition of the genocide often more fervently than Armenian nationals, who have been forced to move on in some ways due to their political realities (Hovannisian, G., 2010; Judah, 2012). For example, when diasporan Raffi Hovannisian, an Armenian American, served as foreign

minister in the first post-Soviet Armenian government, his hard stance demanding genocide recognition was one of the reasons President Levon Ter-Petrosyan requested his resignation (Hovannisian, G., 2010, pp. 171-178). Thomas de Waal (2010) notes, “In October 2009, many diaspora Armenians, mostly descendants of Genocide survivors, found themselves in the awkward position of denouncing the Yerevan government for moving to normalize relations with Turkey” (p. 31). Examples like these illustrate how the continued denial has managed to cause tensions even between Armenians.

Genocide and Denial: Setting Precedents

It was the destruction of the Armenians by the Ottoman state – viewed as an internal affair of a sovereign entity by international laws of the time – that first inspired the Polish-born lawyer Raphael Lemkin to create a framework in international law for the concept of genocide (Power, 2007, pp. 17-19). Indeed, he created the term genocide himself. Although he began this effort in the 1930s, while warning people with a prophetic nature of the Nazi regime’s intentions, he failed to convince either the community of international lawmakers or even his own family that action needed to be taken. As a result, he lost 49 of his family members, including his parents, in the Holocaust (p. 49). He dedicated his entire life to the creation and ratification of the genocide convention, article 2 of which defines genocide as:

any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (Power, 2007, p. 62)

Based on this definition, and perhaps on its adoption by the UN in 1948, while the Nazi atrocities of WWII remained forefront in people’s minds, the Holocaust became the defining example of what a genocide is (Akçam, 2012, p. xxix). Yet, Lemkin’s aim was to create an international law expressly forbidding and making punishable what had happened to the Armenians as well as the Jews.

Scholars agree that the Armenian genocide was a direct predecessor to the Holocaust, in part because Germany, as the Ottoman ally and mentor, had German officers assisting in the genocide (Balakian, 2003, p. 167; Coloroso, 2008; Lifton, 2003). One of the most ubiquitous quotations now associated with the Armenian genocide is the rhetorical question Hitler posed

prior to the Nazi invasion of Poland: “Who still talks nowadays of the extermination of the Armenians?” (Balakian, 2003, pp. 164-165). One might imagine that this would have drawn Armenian and Jewish survivors together in mutual support, recognition and solidarity, but this has unfortunately not been the case. Writing in the 1970s, Armenian American Michael Arlen witnessed both defensive Armenian and Jewish reactions to the mention of the “other” genocide (Arlen, 1976), and in the course of my own research 35 years later, I have encountered the same. In a detailed comparison of genocide denial strategies, eminent Armenian historian Richard Hovannisian (1997) describes efforts to create animosity between Armenians and Jews:

Deniers of the Armenian Genocide uphold the truth and criminality of the Holocaust and make an appeal to keep it uncontaminated by confusing it in any way with the hoax of a so-called Armenian genocide; deniers direct representations of their version of the Armenian genocide to Jewish groups as well as the Israeli government. (p. 43)

It is disappointing but not surprising that, in response, many Armenians feel historically overshadowed by the widely recognized Holocaust despite the two events’ closely connected narratives and their joint basis for the formation of Lemkin’s genocide convention.

The successful Turkish effort to frame the Armenian genocide as “illegitimate” to Jewish groups is an example of Patricia Williams’ “representational force” (1998). This refers to the ways groups are represented to each other (and the wider community) and consequently by each other. This process results in the continual (re)creation and (re)enforcement of borders. The Armenian genocide is represented as illegitimate, and this illegitimacy is represented as a threat to the legitimacy of the Holocaust. As members of Jewish groups absorb this representation, they draw distinctions between Jewish and Armenian histories, and consequently, between people. These distinctions are recreated and passed on, strengthening the borders. Armenian perceptions of Jewish attitudes (regardless of the reality of these attitudes) result in mutual border building and further group differentiation. Instead of finding common ground, differences are continually highlighted. Representational force is powerful, dangerous and unfortunate – these negative experiences of border creation and enforcement may discourage Armenian collaborative efforts with non-Armenian groups, even if doing so may be the best way to achieve their goals, as I will return to later.

The Turkish government denial remains the one major distinction between the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust (Hovannisian, 1997). The denial has become

institutionalized (p. 44). The Turkish government's official position is that Armenians were safely deported to Syria and Lebanon; although "gangs" attacked some Armenians and some local authorities acted "irresponsibly," this "emigration" was successful (Süleyman, 2008, pp. 122-123). This type of reinterpretation of historical events is a common tactic used by governments to "manage outrage" over actions such as genocide (Martin, 2009). The actions of the Turkish government as recently as 1996 put their denial in sharper context. They repatriated the remains of Ismail Enver from Tajikistan several decades after his assassination by an Armenian. Enver was one of the three Young Turk leaders who planned and coordinated the genocide. In Istanbul, the former Ottoman capital, he received a state burial, during which the Turkish president described him as an important national hero and symbol (Gakavian, 1997). This echoes the Turkish government's state burial of Mehmed Talât on Istanbul's Hill of Liberty after Hitler returned his remains in 1942, 21 years after Talât's assassination by an Armenian genocide survivor in Berlin (Power, 2007, pp. 2, 23). In Turkey today, there remain streets, public schools, communities, and mosques honoring Talât's legacy (Bedrosyan, 2013).

The ultimate goal of denial is to prevent the genocide from becoming part of global collective memory (Hovannisian, 2003, p. 2), which, as noted, is the final phase of genocide (Lipstadt in Balakian, 2003, p. 383). Turkey has thus far achieved some success of this final phase of genocide by using political and financial pressure to obfuscate historical fact and deter other nations from officially recognizing the genocide. More and more nations and government bodies have recognized the genocide, including the Council of Europe in 2001 (Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute "International Organisations" n.d. This website contains a list of all recognizing governments and organizations). However, Turkey pressures the United States in particular to prevent official recognition. In 2005, an American congressional committee passed two resolutions to officially recognise the Armenian genocide as historical fact, but the Bush administration refused to pass the resolutions due to their military relationship with Turkey (Coloroso, 2008, p. 189). While Barack Obama acknowledged the genocide during his senatorial tenure, he has yet to do so as U.S. president because of America's strategic partnership with Turkey (Trebitch, Schültze, & Friedler, 2009). This has a historic precedent as well: when the United States entered World War I, it declared war against Germany but not the Ottoman Empire, choosing to maintain relations with the Turkish government, which ultimately weakened its position in relation to post-war justice for Armenia (Balakian, 2003, ch. 23).

Governments that do take action to historically preserve the genocide face Turkish retaliation. This issue drew international media attention in 2011 when the government of France debated a bill to criminalize denial of any officially recognized genocide – including, in France, the Armenian genocide. In response to this, the Turkish government recalled its ambassador and banned French military vehicles from Turkish docks and airspace while threatening further retaliation (“Watch your words,” 2011). France had seen this before, in 2000, when they passed a bill officially recognizing the genocide; at that time, Turkey took six months to resume diplomatic relations with France (Balakian, 2003, p. 390). Although the 2011 bill became law in France, France’s Constitutional Council later overturned it (“French court overturns,” 2012).

Strategies of denial also manipulate academics. The Institute for Turkish Studies in the United States – funded by the Turkish government – awards grants to academics and then requests their involvement in political action preventing genocide recognition (Balakian, 2003, pp. 381-385; Hovannisian, 1997, p. 42). The Turkish government also uses coercion to fuel the denial. For example, the first major conference considering all genocides was planned in Tel Aviv in 1982. Some speakers intended to make reference to the Armenian genocide. For that reason, the Turkish government put so much pressure on the universities and institutes involved, as well as the Israeli government, that it was felt that “Jewish lives ... were at risk” (Hovannisian, G., 2010, p. 122; Hovannisian, R., 1997, p. 7). Holocaust survivor and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel stepped out as keynote speaker, and the conference had to be relocated. These are examples of what Richard Hovannisian (1997) calls “the strategies of denialists, rationalisers, relativisers, and trivialisers” (p. 52). In his comparison of the denial of the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust, he details the identical methods of each and the equal danger they present to academic integrity as well as human rights. Denialists conceal certain facts, and distort and exaggerate others to make their claims convincing. To deny any genocide proven by historical fact is to allow for the denial of them all; this behaviour creates a precedent for future genocide denialists to exploit. Hovannisian also argues that allowing anyone to deny the Armenian genocide, or allowing it to be forgotten by history, is collusion in ongoing Turkish crimes (1997).

These examples of Turkish government efforts to maintain and promote the denial speak to a collaborative repression of historical truth. This represses not only the historical facts of violence against the Armenians, but also individual stories of Turkish and Kurdish heroism, of individuals and families who risked their lives to help Armenians survive and escape (for

example, see Bedrosyan, 2013). The Turkish government cannot maintain its denial alone if others do not agree to go along with this, particularly its own citizens. Yet others continue to go along with it. The Australian federal government, for example, has not officially recognized the Armenian genocide. Australian history writers pay little attention to their nation's close connection to the genocide despite some suggestions that the Allied invasion of Gallipoli by British, Australian and New Zealand troops on April 25, 1915 precipitated the start of the Armenian genocide (Manne, 2011). The Allied attack likely heightened the Turkish siege-mentality and fueled a mania for ridding the empire of Armenians, according to historian Jay Winter (in Balakian, 2003, p. 178). Australia's failure to link the two events in the national consciousness or even actively address their connection has been described as a "cult of forgetfulness on a national scale" (W.E.H. Stanner in Manne, 2011, p. 324). This suits the Turkish government's purposes and maintains the genocide's goals.

The significance and impact of Turkish denial are complex. Beyond the points illustrated above, Henry Theriault (2003) describes four ways the denial is not only collusion of the crime against the Armenian people, but also an extension of it. Deniers are "accessories after the fact" by assisting those responsible in evading guilt (p. 242). Denial is also a form of grave desecration, in the sense that writing about the genocide serves to remember those whose graves remain unknown or whose bodies were left unburied (p. 248). Armenian identity and culture come under attack by deniers as well, because of the genocide's essential role in contemporary Armenian identity – to deny the genocide is to deny a significant part of the Armenian historical experience (p. 247). Theriault's analysis reflects on the denial from the Armenian point of view, but the denial has had significant impact on Turkish citizens as well. The Turkish government's human rights abuses include incarceration and prosecution of journalists, writers and activists and excessive force on the part of the police, who are immune to accountability (Human Rights Watch, n.d.). The repression of journalists, writers and activists is the attempt to repress witnesses, alternative voices, truth, and inevitably, memory.

The denial also causes psychological harm because it is a celebration of the violent destruction of Armenians and a further rubbing of "salt in their already gaping wounds" (Alayarian, 2008, p. 30). In *Consequences of Denial*, a psychological assessment of Armenian post-genocide trauma, Aida Alayarian details the psychological effects of the Turkish denial on Armenians. She argues that, psychologically, the Armenian history of trauma has gone largely unacknowledged and undiagnosed. Alayarian describes silence as a further kind of trauma causing acute mental distress: for decades the Armenian genocide existed largely in "a kind of

conspiracy of silence” (p. 118) which made it that much harder for Armenians to risk stigmatisation and humiliation by speaking about it; this only began to change in the 1990s (pp. 116-119). Armenian culture is too often solely associated with the violence of the genocide, and as a result, “the way in which they relate to their cultural origins is often influenced by feelings associated with loss, anger and rage at having lost their culture” (p. xxviii). This point is particularly salient for diasporans, who may be disconnected from the Armenian language and religion and thus have little other connection to or understanding of Armenianness.

When trauma is experienced on such a mass scale and left unaddressed, it is passed from one generation to the next. Subsequent generations can experience similar psychological effects without the capacity to express their origins (Alayarian, 2008, p. 46). The genocide, as a key aspect of pan-Armenian consciousness, has entrapped Armenian identity: Armenians cannot turn away from the genocide even momentarily, but must guard it against the continued attacks of denial. Ironically, Turkish identity is similarly trapped by the need to perpetuate the denial; the people of Turkey would benefit from mourning the events of the genocide, as a way of moving beyond it (Göçek, 2003).

Collaborative Struggles for Turkish Acknowledgment

The genocide is an historical event of which many Turks remain largely ignorant, a result of successful government efforts with this intention (Akçam in Balakian, 2003, p. 375). As part of this effort, the history of Armenians as a once-significant community within the borders of modern Turkey has been actively erased (Hovannisian, G., 2010, p. 225). However, in recent years there have been indications that an increasing number of Turkish citizens are becoming aware of this history (Trebitsch, Schültze, & Friedler, 2009). A significant turning point within Turkey was the murder of Turkish Armenian journalist and Editor, Hrant Dink, who had written articles urging recognition of the Armenian genocide. Dink was shot outside his Istanbul office on January 19, 2007. The killer, a seventeen-year-old “ultranationalist,” claimed his motivation was Dink’s offense of Turkish honour (Trebitsch, Schültze, & Friedler, 2009). As the documentary *Aghet – a genocide* (Trebitsch, Schültze, & Friedler, 2009) depicts, Dink’s murder sparked a demonstration march of “hundreds of thousands” of Turks wanting to honour his efforts. The marchers carried signs reading “We are all Hrant Dink. We are all Armenians.” A former Turkish ambassador described the march as “very unusual,” and Dink’s daughter, Delal, said of the march,

Nobody could imagine that in Turkey, that many people would go on the street and say “We are all Hrant Dink. We are all Armenians.” There is this public who are

really raising their voice and, well, the state has to hear it at some point and I think they are hearing it. (In Trebitsch, Schültze, & Friedler, 2009)

The march has since become an annual event in Istanbul. In January 2012, it grew into a protest involving “tens of thousands of Turks” who used the occasion to contest Turkey’s lack of media freedom and corrupt justice system (Albayrak, 2012). The willingness of some Turkish citizens to protest may stem from an empathetic stance for the repression of Turkey’s fourteen million Kurdish citizens and their desire for an independent or autonomous Kurdish state (“Turkey and its rebel Kurds,” 2010). This also dates back to the end of the Ottoman Empire, when Kurds believed in a realistic opportunity for an independent nation based on their close relationship with the Young Turk government – a relationship so close that many Kurds had an active role in the Armenian genocide (Hovannisian, G., 2010, pp. 225-226). It is an irony of history that after Kurds helped rid eastern Turkey of Armenians and other Christians, they then became subjects of Turkish repression. Now, their struggles against Turkey’s government are also drawing attention to the historic treatment of the Armenians and the genocide denial. Kurdish leaders in Diyarbakir, Turkey have recently issued a recognition and apology for the role Kurdish communities played in the Armenian and Assyrian genocides, and called on Turkish authorities to recognize the genocide and take steps towards atonement (Akkum, 2013).

Collaboration has been a factor in some recent efforts for Turkish recognition, particularly at the academic level. In 2000, 126 international holocaust scholars signed an affirmation of the Armenian genocide as historical fact and published it in The New York Times (“Centre for Holocaust,” n.d.). The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute (n.d.) (“Public Petitions”) also has a petition of 150 scholars and writers who condemn the denial and urge governments and media to recognize and refer to the Armenian genocide as such. Under the heading “Recognition,” the website for the 2009 genocide documentary *Aghet – a genocide* (n.d.) lists 15 Turkish scholars who have recognized the Armenian genocide. One of these, historian Taner Akçam, situates himself within this struggle in describing his writing as “a call to the people of Turkey to consider the suffering inflicted in their name” (2006, p. 2). Akçam used his access to Turkey’s state archive to publicize nationally “self-incriminating documents” (Hovannisian, G., 2010, p. 216). In *The Young Turks’ Crime Against Humanity*, Akçam (2012) uniquely draws together both Muslim Turkish historical perspectives and those of other ethnic religious groups present during the era of the genocide, including the Ottoman Armenians (p. xiii). Akçam and others emphasize the importance of acknowledgment of responsibility for

mass acts of violence and hatred in order to prevent their future recurrence (Akçam, 2006, p. 2; Coloroso, 2008).

Equally important to Akçam's research is the fact that a Turkish historian had the desire and courage to use official Turkish sources to further document and definitively prove the genocide, although this has meant he is no longer able to live in Turkey (Akçam, 2006, n.p.) and has been listed as a target for assassination by the same terrorist group that assassinated Hrant Dink in Istanbul (Akçam, 2012, p. xii). When Akçam, together with sociologist Fatma Müge Göçek and novelist Elif Şafak, spoke about the genocide at a University of California conference in 2005, it was the first time Turkish professors acknowledged the genocide in an international conference dedicated to Armenian history. Garin Hovannisian, an Armenian American writer, described the conference as the beginning of a new movement: "Finally, an alliance of Armenian and Turkish intellectuals was preparing to confront the original sin of modern history" (Hovannisian, G., 2010, p. 216).

Other examples of collaborative efforts include the "Armenians, Forgive Us" campaign, an online petition launched by 200 Turkish intellectuals, journalists, and public and cultural figures (Abrahamyan, 2010). The petition offered acknowledgment of and apology for the denial of what it referred to as the "Great Catastrophe." Approximately 30,000 people signed the petition in its first ten days online (Aghet n.d.). This seems to be an optimistic indication of Turkish citizens' growing awareness of their national history from perspectives beyond their own government's, and their willingness to acknowledge the past and push for a more honest and reflective future.

Armenians and Turks also need to engage in dialogue, a healing strategy Alayarian feels is essential to both groups' ability to renounce culturally embedded hatred and "humanize de-humanized actions" (Alayarian, 2008, p. 143). Dialogue between descendants of victims and perpetrators is necessary to move past the trauma suffered by both (Schwab, 2004, pp. 177-95). The Armenian diaspora can offer a "neutral" starting place for dialogue, particularly in communities that are home to both Armenians and Turks. Susan Arpajian Jolley, a third generation Armenian American teacher, provides an excellent example of this when she describes the process of memoir writing she undertook with her high school class, which included three recent Turkish immigrants (Jolley, 2004). Many organisations have also begun creating opportunities for Turks and Armenians to meet and collaborate, such as the international non-profit organisation Internews, which organised the creation of collaborative

documentaries with filmmakers from both sides of the Turkish-Armenian border (“Cross-Border film,” 2012).

Theriault (2001) has warned, “Denial is becoming the inevitable future of genocide” (p. 241). The global recognition and remembrance of the Armenian genocide is an issue that has personal significance for Armenians, but also political significance for the world community as a human rights issue. In their identity negotiation, Armenians have to reconcile the violent deaths of family members, neighbours and entire communities; the permanent removal of Armenians from much of their traditional homelands; and the ongoing and virulent effort to permanently erase those events from world history. In light of this, it seems imperative for Armenians to continue to not only advocate for genocide recognition and Turkish admittance of responsibility, but to consider the most effective ways of doing so, even if this may require overcoming uncomfortable barriers such as those of representational force.

April 24, 2015 will mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the Armenian genocide. In the lead up to this event and the commemorations themselves, Armenians and human rights activists have the opportunity to draw increasing attention to the issue of Turkish denial. The 2013 Taksim Square protests in Istanbul were also helpful in drawing international attention to the democratic failings of Turkey’s government and its repressive tactics against free speech. Activists should use the opportunity to tie the protests, which began as a way to protect Gezi Park from demolition, to the issue of Armenian repression in Turkey – Gezi Park was, for several centuries, an Armenian cemetery, but it was destroyed in the period of Turkification and Armenia erasure after World War I (Greenhouse, 2013). Just as during the Taksim Square protests, Turkish activists can continue to draw attention to their government’s ongoing failures of justice, and make genocide recognition part of this platform. Diasporans in the United States, Europe, Australia and elsewhere would benefit by joining in solidarity with Turkish activists, both in their home nations and in Turkey.

As Akçam and other Turkish scholars have demonstrated by working together with Armenian scholars, a collaborative approach changes the debate from one of Turks versus Armenians to one of repression versus human rights. Armenian diasporan communities have many international community organizations, such as the Armenian General Benevolent Union and the Armenian National Committee. These organizations serve their Armenian communities and support recognition efforts, as success in recognizing countries and other state bodies, and near success in the United States demonstrates. Turning some of these efforts specifically to working with Turkish activists may strengthen the already growing awareness movement in

Turkey, as demonstrated by the Armenians, Forgive Us campaign and the marches commemorating Hrant Dink. It seems that for advocacy to finally succeed in shifting Turkish public and government perception to bring recognition by Turkey, it needs to, at least in part, come from within Turkey in a collaborative struggle of both victims' and perpetrators' descendants.

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