

- Anatolian Cultures and Research Association – Aka-Der
- Human Rights Association – Committee Against Racism and Discrimination
- Nor Zartonk
- Platform for Confronting History
- Turabdin Assyrians Platform
- Zan Foundation for Social, Political, and Economic Research

100th Year: STOP DENIALISM

WE DEMAND RECOGNITION, APOLOGY, COMPENSATION

Precisely 100 years ago today, the first arrests that came to symbolize the Armenian genocide began in Istanbul. The Assyrians and Greeks too were victims of the Armenian Genocide. What we speak of here is a crime of 100 years. A shame of 100 years. A denial of 100 years.

We are the grandchildren of the perpetrators of genocide. Perhaps not each and every one of us comes from the lineage of the people who directly participated in the massacres and the plunders, but we were born into their ethnic and religious identity. We belong to a social group that has unquestioningly benefitted from the order and privileges created by the perpetrators of genocide. The crime of genocide and denial was committed in the name of the religion and ethnic identity into which we were born. We carry on our shoulders its shame, its responsibility, and its moral burden.

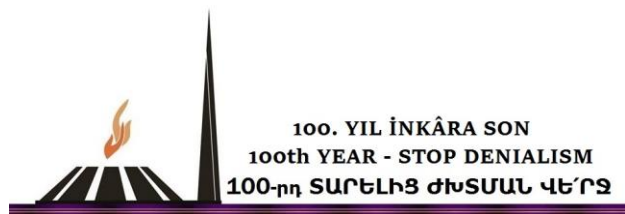
That is the reason why we declare: A commemoration of the crime of genocide on these lands can have meaning only if it expresses the shame and the responsibility of the descendants of the perpetrators, that is, those who have had the opportunity for growth, development, and enrichment in the absence of—*due* to the absence of—the peoples who fell victim to genocide.

While this understanding constitutes the ethical core of commemoration, our concrete demands are for *Recognition, Apology, Compensation, and Restitution*.

The historical building before which we now stand, and which now functions as the Museum for Turkish and Islamic Art, is in fact the Ibrahim Pasha Palace. This palace was used for many years as a prison, including a jail for children. This is where the detainees of 24 April 1915 were incarcerated before they were sent from Haydarpasha to the depths of Anatolia, and then to their deaths. A great many of them were leaders of the Armenian community of Istanbul—poets, writers, members of parliament, scientists, doctors, representatives in the Armenian National Assembly. Among them was Gomidas, the monumental figure of Armenian culture who traveled from village to village, collecting and transcribing thousands of songs in Kurdish, Armenian, and Turkish for the very first time.

Among them were also Armenians from all walks of life. Garabed Agha, the butcher, for example, was brought here before he even had a chance to take off his apron and steel knife-sharpener, or to take his earnings and close his shop. The detainees were first sent off from Sarayburnu to Haydarpasha, and then put on the train. After stopping overnight in Eskişehir, they continued further east. One group was deported to Ayaş, another to Çankırı. Of the 70 people sent to Ayaş, 58 were killed, and of the 150 sent to Çankırı, 81 were killed.

The violence did not end there. Armenian existence in Anatolia, with all its historical, economic and social fabric, was brought to an end by way of the governing Committee for Union and Progress and its violent organization, Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa. It was not only Armenian lives, but their property,



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belongings, money, memories, and history that were usurped. The genocide was not only a destruction, but also a massive plunder. An entire civilization was annihilated, and erased from its homeland of thousands of years.

But even so, they did not succeed in destroying the Armenian people and putting an end to Armenian existence altogether. All over the world, including in Armenia and in Turkey, Armenians have maintained and passed on their identity through their schools, churches, and publications, no matter how little their numbers. And yet denialism perpetuates the genocide for each and every one of them, and prolongs the crime.

Other non-Muslim Anatolian peoples—Assyrians, Greeks, Ezidis—shared the same fate as Armenians in the period of the genocide. 300,000 Assyrians were killed in the deportations and massacres in the region of Tur Abdin, which incorporates Hakkari, Van, and Siirt, as well as in Urmiye in northwest Iran. Starting in 1914, the Greeks of Asia Minor were killed or driven out as a result of organized attacks by gangs under the orders of the CUP. This period lasted until 1923, the founding of the Republic. 1.5 million Greeks, of whom about 750,000 were killed, were torn from their homeland. The lands on which we live today were first purged of its Christian peoples. After the founding of the Republic, the Kurds, some of whom had themselves perpetrated the genocide, were now targeted. This is when the Turkification of the country began, which included the assimilation of other Muslim ethnic groups as well.

As the 100th Year—Stop Denialism Initiative, we here call out to the state of the Republic of Turkey: Recognize the genocide. Apologize. Compensate and restitute justice. Only then will the dead be buried as they deserve, in dignity—the dead who flowed in rivers, who were piled up in valleys, thrown down cliffs, drowned in the sea. Only then will their soul find some peace. It is not possible to bring back a world that disappeared. But the recognition of the crime and the restitution of justice will begin to relieve the righteous anger, pain, and longing of the victims’ families who continue to live under the tyranny of denial.

100th YEAR—STOP DENIALISM INITIATIVE