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I would like to begin by thanking you for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts on the centennial commemoration of the Armenian genocide. In 2000, when I first visited the United States for a series of lectures, my presence generated a great deal of suspicion among Armenian-Americans. Few could bring themselves to believe that a Turk would even acknowledge the Armenian genocide. In fact, some even believed I was a spy working for the Turkish government. But, after thirty years of research on this subject matter, I have gained the confidence of the Armenian community, as well as that of my own countrymen.

The Turkey that is best known today is one that is represented by an aggressive, denialist government. But there is also another Turkey, and the citizens of *that* Turkey are ready to face their history. We Turks feel obligated to rectify the black stain upon us and upon our honor that was left by those who committed these crimes. At this very moment, in more than 25 cities from Istanbul to Van, people are not waiting for their government to recognize the genocide. Instead, they are blazing a new path; one that allows them to discover their past. Our history does not simply consist of murderers. It is also a history of brave and righteous people who risked their lives to save thousands of Armenians. When we recognize and honor such persons, we help to create an environment that would encourage others who would act likewise.

Why must we Turks, as well as the global community, recognize the Armenian genocide? The answer, I would suggest to you, is very simple: If we agree to acknowledge and remember the Nazi-perpetrated Holocaust---*and I am confident that most of us feel that remembrance of those crimes is necessary*---then we are equally obligated to acknowledge and remember the Armenian genocide. I believe that this statement stands on its own merits and that we should ask ourselves: Why is it that the question of recognizing the historicity of the Holocaust is not up for debate within political circles, while the Armenian genocide---despite its recognition within respectable academic circles---still is?

Recognition of my country's historic wrong doings is not a simple opinion or attitude on a past event---instead is directly related the kind of society that we envision for our future. Dehumanization is the most important component of all mass atrocities. In order to be able to kill, perpetrators dehumanize their victim. Recognition is necessary to acknowledge the human dignity of victim! Without recognition the consequent generations cannot be properly mourn and heal. Mourning and healing are necessary for closure and can only come after the truth is acknowledged. If we fail to acknowledge, we fall into a trap that continues to support the perpetrators and their ultimate goals. After decades of denials, Armenians need to heal and to understand that the justice they seek will prevail. If we want reconciliation and establish peace between Turks and Armenians we have to acknowledge the truth! Without truth, there cannot be peace.

If Turkey wishes to achieve a democratic, stable society and a vision for a better future, it needs to create an environment that is respectful of human rights. Confronting its past wrongdoings is a critical step towards this future. A hundred years ago, the Ottoman government had a flawed concept of national security. They viewed the Armenians and their demands for equality and social justice as a threat to the Ottoman state and society. Their solution to this problem was to target the Armenian people for extermination. Today, Turkish and Armenian children are taught, through textbooks published by the Education Ministry, that the Armenians continue to pose a threat to national security. These textbooks are steeped in false narratives about "treacherous Armenians." This sounds unbelievable but unfortunately it is the bare truth.

What continues to trouble me is that the U.S. has not officially recognized the Armenian genocide. The justification for their position remains the same: National security interests in which Turkey is a critical partner. The argument goes something like this: (pause) It would be pointless to anger Turkey and to jeopardize American security interests for a moral issue that goes back 100 years. It is ironic that the words, 'national security', continue to haunt Armenian people even here in the United States.

But juxtaposing "national interest" and "morality" as being mutually exclusive is just plain wrong. Any security policy in the Middle East that excludes morality in favor of expediency is likely, in the long run, to undermine national security. Historical injustices are not dead issues; the

past *has always been* the present in the Middle East. Insecurity felt by different groups towards each other as a result of events that have occurred in history is one of the central problems in the region. Kurds, Arabs, Alevis, Armenians and other Christians in the regions perceive each other and Turkey through this flawed prism of history. If we want a real politic to be successful in the region we have integrate the acknowledgment of past wrong doings into any national security policy and to stop using it as an excuse

Turkey's denialism of its past and making it an essential part of its foreign policy is not simply a moral abomination; it represents a threat to democracy, stability and security, not only in Turkey but in the region too.

Turkey continues its denialist policies because, until now, it has not had to contend with serious external pressure to do otherwise. But there is this "*other* Turkey" of which I spoke earlier. It is a Turkey that is determined to build a tolerant, democratic society; ready to face up to the darker history of our country's past and put an end to the denialist policies. All that is lacking is external pressure from international community.

The United States has a choice: but if it continues to support a denialist regime, it will endorse this historical mistake. The refusal to recognize past injustices is fundamentally undemocratic and contributes to the destabilization of Turkey and the region. How can the United States, which prides itself on its exceptionalism in supporting liberal values and human rights at home and across the world, justify a position at odds with its own democratic values? America should not uphold human rights only when it is expedient. The test of American exceptionalism is the commitment to persevere in upholding these principles even when it may seem costly or inconvenient to do so.

By officially recognizing the Armenian genocide, the United States could lend its moral and political weight to the cause of encouraging Turkey to come to terms with its history, to further embrace democratization, and to contribute to its own future stability and that of the region. The citizens of my Turkey, the "other Turkey," are waiting for you to join us in acknowledging the truth.