

**COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND
COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

**TESTIMONY OF VAN Z. KRİKORIAN
CO-CHAIR, ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA**

HEARINGS ON THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE CENTENNIAL

April 23, 2015 – Washington, DC

As painful as every April 24th is for those of us whose families were decimated during the Armenian Genocide to reflect on our losses, we are grateful to leaders like Chairman Chris Smith and institutions such as the Helsinki Commission for your critical work in support of human rights and American values.

We appreciate your efforts in helping to prevent Azerbaijan from solving its “Armenian issue” by eliminating the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh, and during the Sumgait and Baku pogroms. We appreciate your help to secure Armenia’s independence. Your work over the years has been inspiring. Your 2005 hearings and work on religious rights in Turkey made a difference, and we hope that trend continues with today’s proceedings. We know from our close work with other human rights advocates and victims how much they appreciate your work as well.

By necessity or nature, Armenians are a resilient people who value human rights for all. Here, I also want to pay homage to the Assyrian, Greek and other victims of this era in Ottoman Turkey who were massacred and driven out as part of the program to create a Turkey only for Turks. I also pay homage to the victims of the Holocaust, the Cambodian Genocide, Rwanda, Sudan, Bosnia, the Holodomor, and other genocides.

On this 100th anniversary, the annual Armenian Presidential Prize on Genocide went to the Armenian women who suffered so brutally and were the backbone of the Armenian nation’s rebirth – they deserve special attention and appreciation this week and forever.

We are also pleased to announce the opening of the online Armenian Genocide Museum of America: www.ArmenianGenocideMuseum.org. It focuses on remembrance, education, and genocide prevention, and we were happy to be

able to share the introductory film with the commission. There will be more to come.

In the late 1800s and in the beginning of the 20th century, the *New York Times* distinguished itself in its detailed reporting of the ongoing Genocide. This Tuesday's *New York Times* had another headline that will be remembered: "White House Acknowledges Armenian Genocide, but Avoids the Term." Avoiding the term is fatal.

President Obama has used the Armenian term for the Armenian Genocide ("Meds Yeghern"), he has described and condemned all of the events which provide a dictionary definition of the Armenian Genocide, he has called on Turkey to deal with its past honestly, and he has referred back to his prior statements as a Senator explicitly using the term Armenian Genocide. But since his election as President, he has been misled by false promises and bowed to threats from the worst kind of people. This undercuts his own credibility. Worst of all it puts more lives at risk as history does repeat itself.

The record has never been in doubt. To say that people are shocked is an overstatement. The news that the Turkish Foreign Minister met with Secretary Kerry and National Security Advisor Rice with ISIL on the table made everything clear. However, to say that we are deeply disappointed is an understatement.

The truth is we feel pain and sorrow, close to when a loved one is lost. We feel pain for the innocent people and civilization that was destroyed. We feel sorrow in the knowledge that it will continue unless change comes. And like other victim groups, we are more than resilient enough to rededicate ourselves to the cause of preventing genocide which we have inherited.

Turning now to the record, let us not forget that on April 22, 1981, President Ronald Reagan stated "Like the genocide of the Armenians before it and the genocide of the Cambodians which followed it—and like too many other such persecutions of too many other peoples—the lessons of the Holocaust must never be forgotten." (Proclamation 4838). President Reagan issued similar statements as Governor of California.

Recognizing that Armenians suffered genocide has indelible roots in the legal record. The post-World War I Turkish government tried and convicted the key perpetrators with an indictment for the "massacre and the destruction of the Armenians [which] were the result of the decisions by the Central Committee...."

At the Nuremberg trials, British prosecutor Lord Shawcross cited the crime against humanity Armenian precedent as legal grounds to hold the Nazis responsible.

The May 28, 1951 official U.S. “Written Statement” filed with the International Court of Justice regarding the UN Genocide Convention states: “The practice of genocide has occurred throughout human history. The Roman persecution of the Christians, the Turkish massacre of the Armenians, the extermination of millions of Jews and Poles by the Nazis are outstanding examples of the crime of genocide.”

Let us also remember Hitler’s chilling 1939 quote to his commanders urging no mercy. “Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians.” This quote is publicly displayed in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

Raphael Lemkin who coined the term genocide repeatedly pointed to the Armenian experience as not only a definitive example of the crime but also one of the reasons why the crime had to be codified in a treaty. Lemkin convinced Turkey to be one of the first signatories to the UN Genocide Convention in light of the Armenian Genocide.

To be clear, the person who invented the term genocide defined it by pointing to what happened to the Armenians.

The International Association of Genocide Scholars has unequivocally confirmed the obvious classification of the Armenian Genocide as such, and there are no reputable, qualified scholars who can seriously dispute it today. “America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915” published in 2000 edited by Jay Winter based on the joint Library of Congress, Armenian National Institute (ANI), and U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum conference is a definitive testament to the record, as is the 1990 publication of “The Armenian Genocide in the U.S. Archives 1915-1918.”

In a 1989 Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, a question was raised about 69 scholars allegedly questioning the Armenian Genocide—then Chairman Joe Biden characterized them as idiots. In fact, some of the signatories never consented to inclusion of their names, many had no expertise in the area, and others were either paid or threatened by the then Turkish government to lend their names—calling them idiots was charitable.

Then how did denial start and how did it last as long as it has?

The answer is simple—successive Turkish governments have used the issue to instill fear, promote racism, distract their population from the truth, and avoid progress. Having re-written their own history, they are now afraid to tell the truth as they will lose votes and risk power.

Tragically, this pattern has found accomplices, as Turkish leaders have openly threatened countries which do not deny the Armenian Genocide. Those who bend to bullying continue to be bullied. Those who bend, do not show honor and backbone. German Chancellor Merkel and the Austrian Parliament added their names to the honor roll this week.

Turkish society is increasingly coming to terms with its past. More people in Turkey than ever before are learning their own history and even apologizing for it.

A surprising number of Turks are learning that in fact they descend from Armenian women who were stolen from their families and Turkified. Many of the hidden or crypto Armenians are openly embracing their Armenian roots, and asking the kinds of questions about their identity that any person naturally would. Kurdish leaders and the Kurdish population have apologized for their role in the Armenian Genocide and many of them are actively seeking to make amends. In the last presidential campaign in Turkey, one candidate, Selahattin Demirtas, actually included Armenian Genocide recognition in his campaign. Honest people in Turkey descended from families who witnessed the massacres and deportations know what happened, and they are being heard.

Among the bravest is a journalist, Hasan Cemal, whose grandfather was one of the three leaders of the World War I Turkish government responsible for the genocide. Hasan not only apologized for the Armenian Genocide but also published a book in Turkish titled “1915: Armenian Genocide” in honor of his friend, fellow journalist Hrant Dink who was publicly assassinated in Istanbul for working toward reconciliation by a fanatic anti-Armenian nationalist in 2007- a crime that is still unresolved.

Documentation of the Genocide is overwhelming. There are over 30,000 pages in the U.S. archives alone. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau’s cables and reports are chilling. He wrote, “Deportation and excesses against peaceful Armenians are increasing and from harrowing reports of eyewitnesses, it appears a campaign of race extermination is underway under pretext of reprisal against

rebellion” (July 16, 2015). Consul Leslie Davis reported, “Any doubt that may have been expressed in previous reports as to the Government’s intentions in sending away the Armenians have been removed and any hope that may have been expressed as to the possibility of some of them surviving have been destroyed. It has been no secret that the plan was to destroy the Armenian race as a race are legion and consistent.” (July 24, 1915).

As scholars look deeper, the record is only reinforced. Recently, the role of another courageous American—Wilfred Post—has been uncovered. Thanks to the work of Dr. Rouben Adalian, we know the photographs taken in 1915 by Dr. Wilfred Post constitute a unique set of pictorial records of the Armenian Genocide, comparable only to those taken by Leslie Davis, U.S. Consul in Harput [Kharpert]. The precise location of the pictures can be demonstrated through comparison with other photographs depicting scenes of Konya. The captions provided by Dr. Post leave no room for speculation about the people appearing in them.

It is amply evident from the captions he provided, as well as the supporting eyewitness reports which he personally authored, that decades prior to Raphael Lemkin’s crafting of the definition of genocide, Dr. Wilfred Post had grasped the larger scope and nature of the state crime being committed. He intuitively documented the aspects of genocide as ultimately codified in the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. By recording these particular aspects consonant with the definition of genocide, he certified that the Ottoman government was committing the acts listed in the eventual UN Genocide Convention Article 2 definition: “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.¹

¹ Article 3 of the UN Genocide Convention defines the following crimes that are punishable: (a) Genocide; (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide; (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide; (d) Attempt to commit genocide; (e) Complicity in genocide.

The pictures reached the United States because they were delivered to Reverend William Peet, treasurer of the American Bible House in Constantinople, who worked closely with the American Embassy to protect the interests of the American missions and to guarantee the personal safety of the American missionaries once war broke out and relations between the United States and Ottoman Turkey became strained, particularly over the mistreatment of the Armenian population. The pictures were transmitted by Ambassador Henry Morgenthau to the Department of State, through diplomatic pouch, confirming that the ambassador, and his staff, were aware of what happened, and were fully advised of the conditions under which the Armenian people were perishing across the Ottoman Empire. Subsequently, along with Department of State records, Dr. Post's photographs were deposited at the United States National Archives.

Dr. Post, along with Dr. William Dodd, and Miss Emma Cushman, ran the American Hospital in Konya. Along with the educational establishments, the medical facilities created by American missionaries, most associated with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), constituted part of an extensive missionary network grown through the course of a century and guided by professionals, both men and women, who graduated from notable institutions of higher learning in the United States, including Mt. Holyoke, Oberlin, Princeton, Yale, and Harvard.

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Congress chartered the Near East Relief, which also reflects a monumental chapter in U.S. history. Its archives are also compelling.

Exemplary figures in the United States diplomatic service whose conscientious reporting remains a permanent testament to the horrors of the

Armenian Genocide include Jesse B. Jackson, U.S. Consul in Aleppo; Leslie A. Davis, U.S. Consul in Harput (Kharpert); Oscar Heizer, U.S. Consul in Trebizond; George Horton, Consul General in Smyrna; and in Constantinople - Gabriel Bie Ravndal, Consul-General, Philip Hoffman, Charge d'Affaires, Abraham I. Elkus, Ambassador, and Henry Morgenthau, Ambassador.

Bowing to pressure on the U.S. record concerning the Genocide is not what these brave people could ever foresee. They were heroes.

We are honored that so many members of the Morgenthau family are in Armenia this week to uphold the honor of the Ambassador's service, including a two year-old Henry Morgenthau. They represent the best of America.

The archives of France, Britain, the Vatican, Russia, Israel, Italy, Austria, Germany, Armenia, and many other holdings also confirm the enormity and truth of the murder of the Armenian nation. The German archives are particularly telling as Germany was Turkey's wartime ally. Other archives include captured Turkish records.

When the facts of the Genocide emerged, on May 24, 1915, France, Great Britain and Russia jointly declared "In view of those new crimes of Turkey against humanity and civilization, the allied governments announce publicly to the Sublime-Porte that they will hold personally responsible [for] these crimes all members of the Ottoman government and those of their agents who are implicated in such massacres." That 1915 use of the term crime against humanity was a breakthrough in international human rights law.

For decades, Turkish officials have sworn they are opening or have opened their archives. This disingenuous claim is a denial tactic aimed at obscuring the truth and avoiding recognition. Putting aside Wikileaks disclosures of diplomatic records confirming the years of obvious culling of the Ottoman Turkish archives, the archives holding all the trial exhibits from the post war Istanbul trials establishing the pre-mediated murder of a nation have never been made available. We know they existed; they were reported in the judicial decisions, and we know they substantiate the charges. We have called for their release for decades now; obviously, the only reason why they have not been released is that they further prove the crime.

In 2015, those who deny the Armenian Genocide have as much credibility as flat earthers. But they are funded and still remain quite dangerous; the consequences of their behavior cost lives.

In 2005, under the guise of a First Amendment case, the last vestiges of deniers filed a federal lawsuit in Massachusetts hoping to undermine the teaching of the Armenian Genocide in public schools by inserting genocide denial literature in the state curriculum. They contrived a ridiculous new term – “contra genocide scholarship” – and demanded their curriculum be included in teaching materials.

In a unanimous 2010 opinion (written by retired Associate Justice of the Supreme Court David Souter, sitting on a three judge panel including Michael Boudin and Jeffery R. Howard) the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts affirmed the decision of the District Court dismissing *Griswold v. Driscoll*. Today, forty four states mandate teaching or recognize the Armenian Genocide, with curricular materials that stand the test and have been vetted by scholars.²

Before I go on, I want to observe that we all know President Obama is going to be quoted extensively on the Armenian Genocide this week. The Pope’s April 12 statements acknowledged the Armenian Genocide and called on other countries to recognize it. The resolution of the European Parliament, Chancellor Merkel’s and the Austrian Parliament’s use of the term Armenian Genocide, and the presence of Presidents Hollande of France and Putin of Russia with some 60 foreign delegations at the centennial commemorative events in Armenia this week places the U.S. record into sharp focus.

In the coming days, we will read many times the 2008 Barack Obama quote that “the Armenian Genocide is not an allegation, a personal opinion, or a point of view, but rather a widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming body of historical evidence. The facts are undeniable. An official policy that calls on diplomats to distort the historical facts is an untenable policy....America deserves a leader who speaks truthfully about the Armenian Genocide and responds forcefully to all genocides. I intend to be that President.”

² The 2012 9th Circuit case *Movsesian, et al. v. Victoria Versicherung AG* shows what happens if a President is not clear and consistent though. There the court did not apply a California state statute allowing payment on genocide era policies because of a mistaken reading of the U.S. record. Thankfully, President Obama’s April 24, 2013 Remembrance Day statement corrected that misreading.

He could not have been more clear on where he stood in 2008. As the rest of the world watches, Americans still anticipate his performance on that promise.

But the other eloquent quote I would ask this Commission and others to consider now reflects the same sentiment we hold toward the entire population of Turkey and Turks around the world – it is from President Obama’s first inaugural address in 2009: “we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect. To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society's ills on the West, know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy. To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.”

Today, the President of Turkey shows no respect. He sows conflict. He blames society’s ills on the West. He is destructive. He is clinging to power through deceit. He silences dissent. He is on the wrong side of history in denying the Armenian Genocide, and in many other areas.

Turkey is where our family members’ remains are – Armenian civilization goes back over 3,000 years there. The graves of those innocent victims murdered by a genocidal government are unmarked, their homes lost, and their churches and cultural riches ruined. How much would it take for President Erdogan to show real respect for those losses?

Instead, he cynically scheduled the commemoration of the battle of Gallipoli on April 24, outside of its usual date so as to divert countries from participating in the Armenian commemoration. When confronted with the obvious ploy, he criticized Armenians for choosing April 24 to conflict with his artificial commemoration date.

We did not choose April 24, 1915 – Erdogan’s predecessors ordered the start of the killing on that date. In fact, Armenian commemoration on April 24 after World War I began in Turkey with the permission of more sensitive and respectful authorities than apparently exist there now.

The President of Turkey has again recently threatened to expel Armenians living in Turkey. Last year he stated that it is ugly to be called an Armenian. He conflated Muslim deaths during the war with no relation to Armenians with the deaths of Armenian victims, just as discredited deniers used to do in the early 1990s to claim mutual losses and no victim group.

In the Turkish city of Kars, an artist created a statue in honor of Turkish Armenian Friendship. In 2011, then Prime Minister Erdogan had it torn down. Last month, a court found for the artist and ordered now President Erdogan to pay roughly \$3,800 in damages.

Turkish Nobel Prize laureate Orhan Pamuk has called Article 301 of the Turkish penal code which punishes anti-Turkish statements and has been used against him and others for speaking honestly about the Armenian Genocide, a “secret gun” which is hidden but can be taken out whenever the authorities choose to persecute free speech.

As we gather here today, Turkey is actively aiding Azerbaijan in avoiding compliance with the Conventional Forces in Europe arms limitations, providing military personnel, and working to debilitate Armenia, and wipe out the Armenians living in the Nagorno Karabakh Republic. Despite clear treaty obligations from 1921 requiring Turkey to grant Armenia free access to the Black Sea, Turkey continues to blockade Armenia. Turkey refuses to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia and even though Armenia is a member of the World Trade Organization, Turkey will not engage.

As Armenians have before, we are willing to extend a hand if the fist on the other side is unclenched.

Armenia has had three presidents since its independence in 1991. All three have supported normalizing relations with Turkey without any preconditions. Normalizing does not, however, mean abandoning efforts to gain recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

In 2009, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan took a bold and courageous step with Armenia’s signature on Protocols to normalize relations with Turkey. After ratification, those agreements would have established diplomatic relations, re-opened the border, and established mechanisms to review multiple issues between the countries, including legal issues that should be resolved.

The Protocols represented a breakthrough as there was no linkage of Turkish-Armenian relations with Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. With Swiss mediation and the foreign ministers of France and Russia as well as the U.S. Secretary of State present, the agreements were signed six years ago. The diplomatic history revealed that Azerbaijan had been briefed in advance and never

objected; but after the signing, Azerbaijan vetoed Turkey's keeping its commitments and to this day Turkey has not fulfilled its obligations.

With those facts apparent to everyone who can read, earlier this month, President Erdogan said with no apparent shame that Turkey's "door is still open to Armenia." He also continued to misrepresent that all historical documents are available and called for a commission to study the Genocide.

Considering the record, Armenian President Sargsyan has a good response on the disingenuous commission idea -- Turkey seems determined to keep asking for commissions until one finally agrees with its position.

I participated from 2001 to 2004 in the Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC) chaired by David L. Phillips who is now at Columbia University. I found it to be one of the most significant endeavors of my life. Our commission was approved by both the Turkish and Armenian governments, and our composition included former foreign ministers and seasoned individuals who represented diverse viewpoints. The Armenian side included Andranik Migranyan, Alexander Arzoumanian, and David Hovanissian; the Turkish side included Ilter Turkmen, Ozdem Sanberk, Sadi Erguvenc, Gunduz Aktan, Ustun Ergruder, and Emin Mahir Balcioglu.

Our initial task was to last one year and come up with joint recommendations to concerned governments if possible. Eventually we used a legal process on the Armenian Genocide facilitated by the International Center of Transitional Justice (ICTJ) with a hearing on the applicability of the UN Genocide Convention to the Armenian experience. In 2003, the resulting legal opinion, commonly referred to as the ICTJ opinion, declared that all the elements of the legal term genocide were established. Ted Sorensen and Alex Borraine were on the hearing panel, and the matter was decided on facts that were not in dispute.

If the ruling had gone the other way, there is no doubt that deniers would have trumpeted it forever. With that difficult process behind us, however, it is time to move forward and not question the terminology any more.

Chairman Smith, I expect, will remember one of the Turkish TARC members, Ambassador Gunduz Aktan who appeared before your House Subcommittee in 2000 to oppose the Armenian Genocide resolution. He was adamant in his denials and threatened retaliation against the U.S. if the resolution

passed. Chairman Smith responded honorably and forcefully in defense of the U.S. He would not succumb to the threats.

Ambassador Aktan (since deceased) could be an infuriating person, and no one would think I or my Armenian colleagues would ever find common ground with him. He was the person who most wanted the ICTJ legal process though, and he participated in the presentation of the Turkish case along with their side's attorneys. (Samantha Power who is currently the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and author of "A Problem from Hell-America and the Age of Genocide" was our first witness, and I will always be grateful to her for that and more.)

Ambassador Aktan was not pleased with the result of the process, but to his everlasting credit, he made sure the opinion was correctly translated into Turkish and published. He did that because he gave his word. Compare that to how Turkey signed the Protocols in 2009, immediately tried to re-write the deal, and never ratified the terms.

The TARC process did a lot more than produce the ICTJ opinion of course, and shows that Armenians are willing to engage with Turks to solve problems. This week, the Project 2015 group has gone to Turkey to meet people and participate in the commemorative events there. Catalyzed by TARC, civil society contacts and initiatives were started that prosper to this day. One of our most useful projects was to ask groups of Armenians and Turks what they wanted from each other and more importantly what they felt the other side wanted from them. The answers surprisingly created more than enough common ground. Eventually, we agreed on joint recommendations to concerned governments and terminated our activities in 2004.

So, we have seen fists unclenching and hands opening. And that needs to continue.

For it to continue productively though, the U.S. cannot stand by the whitewashing of its own record. Reconciliation cannot fully occur without recognition. America does deserve a leader who speaks truthfully about the Armenian Genocide and responds forcefully to all genocides.

During our TARC work, one of our more distinguished counterparts did not like where we were heading at a particular point and told us that Turkey would never act under pressure. He then thought for a moment, and said on the other hand Turkey will never act without pressure either.

That lesson needs to be remembered in Washington and in other capitals. There are people in Turkey who have very much gone out on a limb to help their country come to terms. Whenever the U.S. hedges, it is sawing the limb off and discouraging the next person from advancing. The consequence is the victory of deceit and a greater likelihood of more human rights violations and genocides.

Ironically, in our case it is also a betrayal of some of the most courageous and noble diplomats and public officials to serve the United States. The U.S. was neutral at the beginning of World War I and U.S. diplomats were able to travel in Turkey and at great risk document and photograph the ongoing extermination of the Armenian race and civilization.

After President Reagan issued the 1981 proclamation, the Department of State Bulletin publication featured an article in 1982 by Andrew Corsun which concluded with a "Note." That "Note" stated that because the historical record was ambiguous, the Department of State did not endorse allegations on the Armenian Genocide. The "Note" was eventually retracted, and the Federal Courts in the context of a Freedom of Information Act case found that U.S. policy historically recognized the Armenian Genocide.

The records released showed that Corsun did not author the "Note," and in fact the first drafts squarely reflected President Reagan's views. But some mystery editor rewrote the document and our U.S. history. Congress became more engaged than ever in illuminating these issues since 1982, and we need to express our appreciation for all of those efforts.

But, the success in rewriting the State Department "Note" emboldened the denial industry to believe that history could be rewritten. In turn, the practice of threatening the U.S. and spreading foreign money to rewrite history grew in the 1980s and 1990s.

Of course, the record of successive U.S. Presidents in deferring to pressure is embarrassing and wrong. Whether it changes because the U.S. will no longer be bullied or because the President decides to support the forces of reconciliation and progress may not matter. But any chance for improvement needs a strong U.S. role as this is an instance where leadership is needed. France, Russia, the European Parliament and many other countries did not compromise their principled stances. Russia, for example, has over \$10 billion more in trade with Turkey than the U.S. It has recognized the Genocide. Standing on principle would

also enhance the U.S. position in the region in other ways by gaining it a new level of respect and credibility.

This week, another Turkish foreign minister has been in Washington to repeat the same discredited lines about archives and commissions and to make threats if the U.S. respects its own record and uses the G-word. This is the same group that gives a lifeline to ISIL.

In an article reflecting on the current situation published this week, TARC chairman Phillips wrote: “President Obama referred to the Genocide as ‘Meds Yeghern’ in the Armenian language. Obama says ‘my personal views are well-known.’ However, the President of the United States is not entitled to a personal opinion. He should say ‘Genocide’ in this year’s Presidential Statement on Remembrance Day. Doing so would catalyze greater discussion in Turkish society. It would put the United States on the right side of history. Genocide recognition is also a legacy issue for Barack Obama.”

I will conclude with another anecdote. We had another memorable commission moment when one of our Turkish colleagues sincerely complained that we made them feel terrible by accusing Turks of genocide. Former Armenian Foreign Minister Arzoumanian looked up and responded “how do you think it makes us feel to have been actually genocided?” That exchange helped, and we need more of them if we are to see justice and restore balance to the lands where our families lie in those unmarked graves.

We understand that no one likes to be branded as a criminal—and we are not painting an entire race with that brush at all. We know that there were courageous Turks who saved Armenians – like many, my father’s family was saved that way. At the same time, like most, my maternal grandmother’s entire family was massacred, and as a young girl she was made a slave. My story or something close can be repeated by almost all Armenians.

We think it is fair that Lemkin’s word be respected, that our inspiring U.S. history be upheld, that treaties are applied, that risk takers for good not be cut off at the knees, and that efforts toward reconciliation and justice continue based on reality not fiction.

The lawyer Raphael Lemkin famously asked “Why is the killing of a million a lesser crime than the killing of a single individual?”

The philosopher George Santayana provided a fitting response: “Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

Thank you again for holding this hearing, and allowing us to give voice to those who cannot speak. I am sure they are watching, as we remember.

VAN Z. KRIKORIAN
Biographical Information
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
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Van Z. Krikorian serves as Co-Chair of the Armenian Assembly of America (www.aaainc.org). He began with the organization in 1977, and has served as Chairman of its Board of Directors, and in other positions for over thirty years. He is a trustee of the Armenian Genocide Museum of America (www.armeniangenocidemuseum.org) and Chairman of its Building and Operations Committee. He is also Chairman of the Armenian National Institute (www.armenian-genocide.org), and serves in other community organizations.

In 1991, Mr. Krikorian was appointed and served as a member of the U.S. delegation to the Moscow CSCE meetings; in 1992, he served as Deputy Representative and Counselor to the United Nations (UN) for the newly independent Republic of Armenia. He is a founding member of the Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission, which began in 2001 and concluded in 2004, after the Commission jointly produced the International Center for Transitional Justice legal opinion on the applicability of the UN Genocide Convention to the Armenian Genocide as well as recommendations to concerned governments.

Mr. Krikorian has also initiated several pieces of U.S. human rights legislation, including Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act and the Humanitarian Aid Corridors Act. In the 1993 decision Krikorian v. Department of State, the District of Columbia Federal Court of Appeals acknowledged that United States policy historically recognized the Armenian Genocide. He also was amicus counsel in the Federal District Court and Court of Appeals cases rejecting attempts to force denialist “contra” Armenian Genocide teaching in Massachusetts public schools.

He is an Adjunct Professor of Law at Pace University Law School in White Plains, NY, teaching Antitrust, International Arbitration, Conflict of Laws, and

International Business Transactions, and has been a member of the George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs Board of Advisors since 2005. Since January 2007, Mr. Krikorian has worked as Chairman and CEO of Global Gold Corporation, an international exploration and mining company he joined in 2003. Previously, Mr. Krikorian was a partner in the New York office of Vedder, Price, Kaufman & Kammholz and prior to that until 1998 practiced with Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler, both in New York City.

Mr. Krikorian received his B.A. degree in International Affairs from George Washington University in 1981 and his J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center in 1984. Following law school, he was a clerk in the United States Federal Court for the District of Vermont. In the summer of 1980, he studied at the Armenian Seminary in Bikfaya, Lebanon, and is active in the St. Gregory Armenian Church of Westchester. Originally from Framingham, Massachusetts, he resides with his wife, Priscilla, who is also an attorney, in Rye, New York. (All four of their children are currently out of the house pursuing their educations, but who knows.) He is a member of the American Bar Association, the Armenian Bar Association, the New York Bar, the District of Columbia Bar, and the Vermont Bar Association (Professional Responsibility Committee).