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ABRAHAM FOXMAN'S GOOD NAME

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Foxman is not a denier, on the contrary, he has expressed genuine interest in learning more facts about what had happened.

It is shocking that Abraham Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League and a Holocaust survivor, who will soon be capping 50 years of dedication to the cause of never again for Jews and for all, is subjected to such a blatant campaign of defamation by political opportunists.

While the Law School of Suffolk University in Boston intended to honor the soon-to-retire Foxman by naming him as the speaker for the commencement on May 17 and announcing that he will be bestowed with the honorary title of Juris Doctor, the Armenian Bar Association flipped the script by publicly urging the university to disinvite the genocide denier.

Certain Armenian websites have been circulating articles that are designed to injure the reputation of both Foxman and the ADL, and it is likely that the Armenian National Committee of Eastern Massachusetts will stage a student protest on commencement day to go along with a spitefully worded online petition to remove him from the event.

Foxman is not a denier. He has never refused to recognize existing facts about the Armenian tragedy of World War I. On the contrary, he has expressed genuine interest in learning more facts about what had happened.

It is only through the study of authentic documents that one may formulate an informed opinion on whether the Ottoman government acted with the intention to destroy the Armenian people as the genocide label would warrant or in consideration of wartime necessities to clear vulnerable areas within its territory of a population whose leaders were colluding with the enemy.

Indeed, the Ottoman state removed Armenians from their homes during WWI, and did not protect them from hunger, diseases and raids. Ones heart cannot remain indifferent to the suffering experienced by the Armenians, and the emotion that is still felt by this generation of Armenians for whom the memory of the events is a pivotal aspect of their heritage.

This memory, however, is manipulated by political agenda. The facts concerning the intentions of both Turks and Armenians in their conflicting national aspirations are still being studied. The context is wider than WWI, and involves a long history of religious prejudice, the interests of great powers and the inflammation of ethnic conflicts at the expense of many Muslim and Jewish communities as well as Christian ones.

Essential sources on what the Ottoman government and the Armenian leadership were trying to accomplish are only now becoming available. Whoever is making rash and harsh judgments is doing so because of a hurry to meet political ends.

Unfortunately, many of the voices that are the loudest on the matter are of those who are either committed to national interests or to genocide as an academic discipline. Correspondingly, Armenian lobby groups and career genocide scholars who are not capable of reading a single Ottoman document are the ones who spread a culture of disregard to the details of Ottoman wartime intentions and push for a genocide label that is an anti-Turkish libel.

Interestingly, the bully tactics employed against Foxman and the ADL attest to this lack of historical integrity. The ratification of the genocide convention in the United States in 1988, without which genocide awareness would not have been what it is today, was mainly achieved thanks to incessant efforts by Bnai Brith, the ADLs parent organization, which finally convinced President Ronald Reagan to make it a priority.

Yet, ironically, Foxmans attackers have turned against the very continuer of those who led the call for the US to ratify the genocide convention; these attackers have turned the genocide convention into a tool of political intimidation.

The United Nations Genocide Convention was a direct outcome of the Holocaust, and its ratification in the US four decades later was done on behalf of all national, ethnic, racial and religious groups, to ensure the outlawing of the kind of systematic mass murder that was executed by the Nazis. In a dramatic twist, the term genocide has become a burden

on the memory of the Holocaust.

While William Korey, a former director of the ADL, led the debate against the American Bar Association for decades so that American law would stand against another genocide like the Holocaust, in todays reality Foxman is targeted by the Armenian Bar Association for his courage to speak on the historical uniqueness of the Holocaust.

Undoubtedly, the accurate study of the Holocaust is undermined when references to it are not made for the sake of learning but as a means to promote political campaigns. This is a process through which the depiction of the Holocaust is compromised, and the memory of the Holocaust becomes shaped by foreign considerations. The presence of Adolf Hitlers so-called Armenian quote in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is a case in point.

The quote, Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians, is on display in the American national Holocaust museum because of the wishes of pressure groups to make the Armenian case appear as Hitlers inspiration for the Holocaust. The quote is there even though its origin is questionable, and despite the expressed wishes of Jewish survivors that the memory of the Holocaust would serve an educational purpose without political distortion.

It is a recognized fact that Ottoman Armenians engaged in rebellious activity since the 1880s, even before the massacres of the 1890s, and it would be absolutely distasteful to even imply that European Jews at any point prior to WWII sought the destruction of Germany.

In Hitlers mind, however, the Jews did, and were posing a revolutionary threat on an international scale. Hitlers anti-Semitic view that the Jewish presence in Europe was comparable to the Armenian rebellion in Anatolia should no longer be given a platform. Hitler should be remembered as a mass murderer of a particular kind, rather than be shown as a genocide expert; museums should educate on what Hitler did, and certainly not accept what he thought.

The politicization of history is so dominant in the Armenian quest for genocide recognition because of its political rather than honest aims. One political aim is to overshadow Armenias conquest of Nagorno-Karabakh in the 1990s by popularizing a narrative of victimhood; other political aim of a number of international actors involves using the threat of a genocide label as leverage by which Turkeys policies may be affected.

While a great many innocent Armenian men, women and children were victims of the conflict between the Ottoman state and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation almost a century ago, their memory has been traded for ongoing political battles. Consequently, public figures such as Foxman are pulled into the fray even when expressing apolitical fairness.

By maintaining a guarded approach against the forcing of political narratives through legislation, in the face of a vicious branding, Foxman bravely confirms the traditional commitment that was made by the ADL long ago to defend democratic ideals. To deny political abuse of memory is no denial of historical facts, but rather their protection.

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