
TURKEY SLAMS OBAMA'S 1915 COMMENT

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History of Truth

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Turkeys Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Friday that U.S. President Barack Obamas comment on the 1915 incidents represented a one-sided interpretation of history.

President Obama described the events of 1915 involving Armenians within the Ottoman Empire as "Meds Yeghern", an Armenian term meaning "great calamity" in a statement released Friday.

In a written statement ,Turkeys Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Obamas statement was a new example of a one-sided history telling of the pain suffered during the World War I.

Turkey has shown the will to build a joint future with peace based on the shared living experience for centuries between Turkish and Armenian nations. It is sad that friend and ally countries encourage the circle that [aim] to deepen the conflict instead of answering [Turkeys] call. It is obvious that the efforts to politicize the pain suffered in history do not do any good to anyone so far.

While this is the situation, the circles that aim to profit from the positions that third-party countries would take on the different dates of the year not only harm the hope for friendship and peace but they also disrespect the pain suffered during those days.

We invite the U.S. government to evaluate the historical facts based on a fair memory while taking into consideration the pain of all sides and adopt an objective, reasonable and constructive approach.

What happened in 1915?

World War I was a global disaster that left 15 million people dead and another 20 million injured. The empires of the Ottomans, Austria-Hungary and Russia collapsed and boundaries were remapped. Millions of people had to leave their homes -- a common fate for the people who formed the Ottoman Empire, including Armenians.

During the war, some Armenian nationalists took advantage of the fact that the Ottoman and Russian forces were fighting each other and collaborated with the Russian army, with the aim of creating an ethnically homogenous Armenian homeland.

When the Russian army invaded eastern Anatolia, some volunteer Armenian units in Russia and the Ottoman Empire supported the invasion. Some Armenian officials in the Ottoman army switched sides and joined the invading Russian army against the Turks.

Also, some Armenian armed groups massacred civilians during the Russian invasion. In response, the Ottoman government tried to convince Armenian representatives and opinion leaders to stop the violence, but result in favor came out of it.

The government then decided to shut down the Armenian revolutionary committees and arrest or deport some well-known figures on April 24, 1915 -- a date that would later be selected to hold activities commemorating the so-called "Armenian genocide."

On May 27, 1915, the Ottoman government ordered the Armenian population residing in or near the war zone, as well as those collaborating with the Russian army, to be relocated to the southern Ottoman provinces.

War-time conditions, famine, epidemics, ongoing internal conflicts and local groups seeking to take revenge, left a number of Armenians dead, although the Ottoman government had made careful plans for their safe transfer and tried to meet their humanitarian needs.

Historical documents clearly show that the Ottoman government, not only did not intend for these tragedies to take place, but also punished offenders who committed crimes against the relocated Armenians.

- Need for empathy and fair memory

Armenia and the Armenian diaspora have demanded an apology and compensation for the 1915 incidents.

They have also advocated for the recognition of the events as genocide, a term defined in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide as acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.

Turkey objects to the presentation of the incidents as genocide and describes the 1915 events as a tragedy for both sides.

Turkey argues that the issue should be handled from a perspective of just memory, by respecting the memory of both sides, understanding what each nation experienced and taking a non-political, non-biased approach to history.

The Turkish government has repeatedly proposed the creation of a joint commission of historians from both countries that includes international experts in order to tackle the issue in a scientific manner.

The commission is proposed to conduct its research, not only by using Turkish and Armenian archives, but also by using the relevant archives of other countries.

- Armenia did not use opportunity to normalize relations

The most significant development in the normalization of relations between the two countries was in October 2009, when two protocols were signed to rebuild diplomatic relations and improve bilateral relations.

The protocols proposed an impartial scientific examination of the historical records and archives and the mutual recognition of boundaries in order to restore confidence between the two nations and find solutions to existing problems.

The protocols also included cooperation in a wide range of areas including tourism, economy, transport, communication, energy, environment, high-level political consultations and student exchange programs, which could all help in normalizing relations.

The Turkish government sent the protocols directly to parliament for approval, while the Armenian government submitted the protocols to the constitutional court, which ruled that they did not abide by the nature and wording of the country's constitution.

The constitution refers to the "Armenian Declaration of Independence," in which an item reads: "The Republic of Armenia stands in support of the task of achieving international recognition of the 1915 Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia."

The declaration also names the eastern part of today's Turkey as "Western Armenia."

In January 2010, the Armenian government announced that it froze the approval process of the protocols. Five years later, the protocols were withdrawn from the Armenian parliament.

Turkish authorities believe that in order to overcome the historical and political bitterness, all sides must be honest and open-minded.

Turkey's then foreign minister and incumbent Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said in December 2013, following his visit to Armenia, that one-sided approaches and conjectural evaluations should be avoided in order to find a solution. He added that history could only be built with a "just memory."

In 2014, when incumbent President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was prime minister, he expressed his condolences for the first time to all Ottoman citizens who lost their lives during the 1915 events, including Armenians.

"I offered a hand of friendship in 2014 to Armenia, but, unfortunately, it came to nothing," Erdogan said in a recent speech.

Kaynak/Source: