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**TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTRY SAYS ISRAELI PARLIAMENT'S ARMENIAN 'GENOCIDE' MOTION WILL HARM ISRAEL ITSELF**

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A motion by Israeli lawmakers on recognizing the Armenian "genocide" will harm Israel itself, Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hami Aksoy said on May 25.

Such an attempt by Israel is disrespect to members of Ottoman religious and ethnic groups who lost their lives in World War One. Jews were among them, Aksoy said in a press conference.

The fact that Israel sees the events of 1915 and the Holocaust the same will hurt itself first, Aksoy said, adding that the issue should be discussed by historians and legal experts.

Israeli lawmakers on May 23 approved a motion to hold a plenary debate on recognizing the Armenian genocide, as relations between Israel and Turkey continue their downward spiral.

Ahead of the vote on holding the discussion, Tamar Zandberg of the left-wing opposition Meretz party said the timing of her motion had nothing to do with the rise in tensions with Turkey.

Time and again this issue has fallen victim to political disputes. Not recognizing the Armenian genocide is a moral stain on Israel, Zandberg said.

A plenary discussion would be a significant measure to the moral message Israel is sending the entire world, she said.

The motion was approved 16-0, although a date for the plenary discussion is yet to be set.

Meretz has since 1989 tried to approve recognizing the century-old mass killings of Armenians beginning in 1915 as a genocide, with Israeli governments rejecting the efforts because of ties with Turkey.

Violence on the Gaza border that resulted in the deaths of at least 60 Palestinians last week and the transfer of the U.S. embassy to the disputed city of Jerusalem prompted Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to lash out at Israel, accusing it of state terror and genocide.

Ankara recalled its ambassador to Israel before expelling the Israel envoy and consul general, with Israel also ordering the Turkish consul in Jerusalem to leave.

Turkey accepts many Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire were killed in clashes with Ottoman

forces during World War One, but says the figures are inaccurate and denies the killings were systematically orchestrated. It rejects to use the term genocide and says many Muslim Turks were also killed at that time.

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