ACADEMIC DEBATE V. CHEAP SLANDER

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In recent times, articles targeting AVIM and its staff for the opinions they put forward regarding Turkish-Armenian relations have begun to surface.

The most recent example of this is an article that has targeted the young academician and historian Maxime Gauin, who contributes to AVIM with his academic research and writings. This commentary will not attempt to defend Gauins name or go into the details of articles penned against him. Gauin himself will have the discretion to provide detailed and appropriate response to unworthy attempts at slander.

The reason why the latest article constitutes an unworthy attempt at slander has to do with its numerous inconsistences, and baseless and cheap accusations. It contains no academic criticisms against Gauin whatsoever, it instead only tries to denigrate him. The fact that the article provides no response to Gauins academic work and his successful rebuttals against anti-Turkey views, and instead resorts to character assassination speaks volumes of the desperation of those who had a role in this attempt.

On this occasion, a couple of points need to be reminded.

Up until today, AVIM has consistently voiced the following conviction: The historical reasons for the losses suffered by Armenians during World War I need to be examined, and a common understanding and reconciliation in Turkish-Armenian relations need to be reached in order to open a new chapter in these relations. AVIM will continue its work in this regard with the utmost resolve.

As is known, it is possible to summarize AVIMs position on this issue under three main headings;

1. It is not possible to characterize the losses suffered by Armenians during World War I as genocide. This legal term does not fit in with the events that unfolded during World War I.

2. Tampering with the number of people who lost their lives during World War I and thus increasing the number of Armenian casualties for the sake of dramatizing war-

time losses constitutes an inappropriate and disrespectful numbers game.

3. Armenians were not the only ones to suffer casualties during World War I. 17 million people lost their lives during this war, millions of which were Turkish or other Muslim people. Armenians too suffered casualties during this war. AVIM does not ignore this fact, and acknowledges it just like it acknowledges the other casualties. What AVIM objects to is the allegation that the casualties were suffered by only the Armenians. The pain suffered during this war must be felt by everyone for all sides. AVIM cannot condone those who express no sorrow for the overwhelming suffering experienced by the Turkish side.

AVIM is ready and willing to discuss its historical views anywhere, with anyone, and at any time. AVIM invites people who espouse the "Armenian genocide" narrative to its meetings. However, the number of people -from amongst those who espouse the genocide narrative- who have the courage to attend meetings on this issues are next to none. Furthermore, AVIM has no hesitation in its willingness to attend meetings organized by people who espouse this narrative or the ones organized outside in Armenia. However, AVIMs views have been branded with the cheap denialist label by those who espouse this narrative, which provide an excuse and escape against bringing a brain-storming basis to such meetings. A question that should be posed here is this: how aligned is such an attitude with the principles of freedom of expression and fair academic discussion?

Nevertheless, it is important to point here the current state of affairs regarding this issue. If criticism is to be made toward AVIM or its staff, basing such criticism on the actual content of the AVIMs discourse instead of resorting to cheap verbal attacks would be more appropriate.

About the Author :

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