THE SPANISH SENATE REJECTS A PROPOSAL TO RECOGNIZE THE 1915 EVENTS AS GENOCIDE

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The Spanish Senate rejected on May 13th a motion to urge the government to recognize the Armenian killings between 1915 and 1917 as genocide.

The motion was rejected by the ruling conservative Partido Popular (PP) -which has more than half of the seats in the Senate- while it was supported by PNV (conservative Basque nationalist), IU (leftist), ERC (leftist Catalan nationalist) and Amaiur (leftist Basque nationalist). The parties which abstained from the vote were PSOE (social democrat and main opposition party), CiU, UPN, Coalicion Canaria and Foro Asturias (conservative Catalan, Navarrese, Canarian and Asturian, respectively).

PP senator Jose Maria Chiquillo stated that the Spanish governments position on the issue is to promote good relations between Turkey and Armenia without interferences and to support solutions based on dialogue. Chiquillo argued that accepting this motion would only heighten the existing tension between Armenia and Turkey and would worsen the chances of understanding between the two countries. He also said that starting a revisionist process would not be a positive step and that this is a historical and juridical question that should be left to the two sides in conflict to decide on.

Senator Jordi Guillot, who presented the proposal, said that ducking the question or hiding the truth in order not to upset an ally does not help to improve bilateral relations between Armenia and Turkey, either. He also asked the government to recognize the expression of condolences by the Turkish authorities as a positive step in improving the relations between the two states. He said that Turkey would have to face its past rather sooner than later despite its current position of denial to accept that the 1915 events were a planned and wanted action by the Ottoman authorities.

Guillot rejected an amendment proposed by PSOE which considered the creation of a Turkish-Armenian commission of historians as a tool to move forward in the relations between the two nations. Guillot appreciated the amendment proposal but rejected it on

the grounds that this is not a matter of historians, but rather a political one.

Other senators in favor of the motion argued that there are no historical grounds to reject the genocide and that there are only political motivations behind the senates rejection of the proposal.

Spain and Turkey maintain positive political and trade relations which Spain does not want to damage, and the Armenian Diaspora in Spain is too small in number to put any pressure on the government.

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