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THE US SENATOR SUPPORTING THE ARMENIAN RHETORIC TO BE TRIED FOR CORRUPTION

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In February 2017, the questions directed by US Senator Robert Menendez of the state of New Jersey towards US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson after the beginning of Donald Trumps US Presidency was remarkable for Turkey. Deeming that Turkey-Armenia relations are a primary issue for US foreign policy, this issue was brought up by Menendez in his questions towards the newly appointed Secretary of State Tillerson.[1] Senator Menendez's appears to be more concerned with defending the interests of the Armenian diaspora than US foreign policy. It is interesting that Secretary of State Tillerson gave short answers to the questions directed by Senator Menendez.[2]

As it will be recalled, Senator Robert Menendez presented on 24 April 2017 a draft resolution concerning Armenian claims to the US Senate, arguing that US foreign policy was a demonstration of proper understanding and sensitivity towards human rights and against crimes against humanity.[3] Aram Hamparian, President of the American Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), expressed his gratitude to Senator Menendez and his colleagues for bringing such an arrangement to the Senates attention.[4] As it can be understood, Senator Menendez is considered by members of the Armenian diaspora to be someone close and someone that can be relied upon. Menendez has been a member of the Caucus for Armenian Affairs in the US Congress since 1995.[5]

In 2015, after the announcement of the criminal charges, the New Jersey Senator temporarily resigned from his post to fight against the accusations, as reported on his official Senate website.[6]

Now, Menendez has taken his place on the agenda again with corruption cases.[7] Prosecutors have alleged that Menendez received expensive vacations and campaign donations from his friend and doctor Salomon Melgen in exchange for the political favors Menendez provided to Melgen. It is understood that the corruption case may last for more than two years.

New Jersey Democratic Senator Robert Menendez is notable in the sense that he will be first serving senator to be tried for corruption in 36 years.[8] If Menendez does not resign in case of being found guilty, according to the US Constitution, the termination of the Menendezs senatorship will come up as an issue to be decided upon by the Senate. When

considering the accusations against Senator Robert Menendez, if personal benefit is involved, it can be seen what he is willing to do further the interests of the Armenian diaspora (as well as his own interests). The development regarding the allegations of corruption levelled against Menendez should be seen as an important development in Turkey-US relations in light of the Armenian element.

[1] Turgut Kerem Tuncel, ABD Dışişleri Bakanı Tillersonun Senatör Menendezin Sorularına Yanıtları- 2, *avim.org.tr*, February 9, 2017, accessed September 10, 2017, http://avim.org.tr/tr/Yorum/ABD-DISISLERI-BAKANI-TILLERSON-UN-SENATOR-MENENDEZ-IN-SORULARINA-YANITLARI-2

[2] US Secretary Of State Rex Wayne Tillersons Answers To The Questions Of The New Jersey State Senator Robert (Bob) Menendez, *avim.org.tr*, February 9, 2017, accessed September 11, 2017, http://avim.org.tr/Blog/US-SECRETARY-OF-STATE-REX-WAYNE-TILLERSON-S-ANSWERS-TO-THE-QUESTIONS-OF-THE-NEW-JERSEY-STATE-SENATOR-ROBERT-BOB-MENENDEZ-1

[3] Menendez Introduces Bipartisan Bill to Recognize Armenian Genocide, *armenianweekly.com*, April 25, 2017, accessed September 10, 2017, https://armenianweekly.com/2017/04/25/menendez-bipartisan-resolution/

[4] Menendez Introduces Bipartisan Bill to Recognize Armenian Genocide, *armenianweekly.com*, April 25, 2017, accessed September 10, 2017, https://armenianweekly.com/2017/04/25/menendez-bipartisan-resolution/

[5] Main Pro-Armenian Lobbyist Accused of Corruption, Pressuring Officials, *azernews.az*, September 7, 2017, accessed September 10, 2017, https://www.azernews.az/aggression/118654.html

[6] Robert Menendez, First Sitting Senator In 36 Years To Face Corruption Trial, *ibtimes.com*, September 6, 2017, accessed September 9, 2017, http://www.ibtimes.com/robert-menendez-first-sitting-senator-36-years-face-corruption-trial-2586639?utm_content=buffere036a&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer

[7] Main Pro-Armenian Lobbyist Accused of Corruption, Pressuring Officials, *azernews.az*, September 7, 2017, accessed September 10, 2017, https://www.azernews.az/aggression/118654.html

[8] Robert Menendez, First Sitting Senator In 36 Years To Face Corruption Trial, *ibtimes.com*, September 6, 2017, accessed September 9, 2017, http://www.ibtimes.com/robert-menendez-first-sitting-senator-36-years-face-corruption-trial-2586639?utm_content=buffere036a&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer

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