

SOME CRITICISMS REGARDING PROF. DR. ERIK-JAN ZÜRCHER'S CENTENNIAL STATEMENT - II

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Back in April, Prof. Erik-Jan Zürcher had issued a statement about the centenary of the Events of 1915. On 18 April, I had prepared an article that criticized Zürchers statement for its various aspects.[i] A short evaluation of my article was posted in Turkish by the *Jiyan.org* website (to access this evaluation, please see the endnotes section).[ii] A number of points must be indicated regarding this evaluation:

1. In the context of the term genocide, the word denial is primarily used in reference to people who argue against the reality of the Holocaust. There are fundamentally two factors that trigger these kind of peoples attitude on this issue: 1) They sympathize with Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party, and 2) They harbor anti-Semitic sentiments and attempt to justify them with various excuses. Yet, people who reject the Armenian genocide narrative in general do not possess such a mindset. As in, they do not have a longing for the days of the Ottoman Empire, nor do they harbor an anti-Armenianness. The point that they fundamentally object to is the invalid application of the legal term genocide to the Events of 1915. As such, the blanket application of the world denialist to anyone who rejects the Armenian genocide narrative is nothing more than a cheap labeling tactic and a shallow way to characterize people.

2. Based on both Turkish and non-Turkish sources I have read so far regarding the Events of 1915, it is simply not possible for me to adopt the Armenian genocide narrative. To do so would require me to deny all the knowledge that I possess about this issue. To do so would be to truly engage in denialism.

3. In my article, I had stated that Zürchers centennial statement *portrays* [him as] a partisan historian. *Jiyan.org*, however, narrates my article as if I had stated that Zürchers centennial statement *makes* him a partisan historian. This is obviously not what I had stated. There is a difference between the words *to portray* and *to make.*

4. My article does not contain any part in which I assess the Ottoman governments relocation of its Armenian subjects as being reasonable. In my article, I had stated that the Ottoman government considered relocation to be necessary in overcoming the threat imposed by armed Armenian groups. Despite the fact that a century has passed since 1915, no document has been uncovered which would showcase that the Ottoman government acted with the intention of exterminating its Armenian subjects. On the contrary, documents have been uncovered which indicate that the Ottoman government had no such intention. It would be very difficult to go back one hundred years from 2015, and assess a past event as being reasonable or unreasonable by employing todays standards. It is a fact that Ottoman Armenians suffered greatly. Yet, it is also a fact that armed Armenian groups tormented Ottoman Muslims; 518,000 Muslims in Anatolia died because of these groups aggressions. These armed groups domineered Ottoman Armenians who did not think like these groups and tormented them as well. The Events of 1915 did not unfold in the way that Armenians explain to themselves and to others around them.

5. My article does not contain the statement; Moreover, why should we recognize the genocide when history and law are at Turkeys side? In reality, my article contains the following statement; Law and history are on Turkeys side, so why should Turkey affirm the genocide narrative? The statement that *Jiyan.org* attributes to my article, and the statement that is actually in my article differ from each other in their meaning. The statement that *Jiyan.org* attributes to my article gives off the following meaning; There was a genocide, but history and law are nevertheless on Turkeys side, so Turkey is not obligated to recognize this genocide. On the other hand, the statement that is actually in my article gives off the following meaning; Historical facts and law invalidate the genocide narrative. As such, Turkey is not obligated to accept this narrative.

6. Making peace, in any shape or form, cannot be attained by blindly accepting a narrative which is based on distortions, exaggerations and sometimes outright fabrications, and which is used to create negative opinions about a specific target. The Armenian genocide narrative is built upon ignoring historical facts and law, and is today being employed as a weapon for intensifying Turcophobia and anti-Turkey sentiments. How can such a narrative serve to facilitate making peace in any shape or form?

[i] Mehmet Oğuzhan Tulun, Some Criticisms Regarding Prof. Dr. Erik-Jan Zürchers Centennial Statement, *AVIM*, http://www.avim.org.tr/yorumnotlarduyurular/en/SOME-CRITICISMS-REGARDING-PROF--DR--ERIK-JAN-ZURCHER%E2%80%99S-CENTENNIAL-STATEMENT/4013

[ii] Please see the Jiyanın notu (Jiyans note) section that is at the bottom of the webpage; Alıntı - Bu Sadece Ahlâki Bir Mesele Değil #100lesme (Quote This Is Not Only An Ethical Issue - #100lesme), *Jiyan.org*, http://jiyan.org/2015/04/23/tarihci-erik-jan-zurcher-bu-sadece-ahlaki-bir-mesele-degil-100lesme/

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