THE AMBIGIOUS RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE BELGIAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES REGARDING THE EVENTS OF 1915

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On 23 July, the Belgian House of Representatives adopted a resolution regarding the Events of 1915. The resolution makes reference to a speech delivered by the Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel on 18 June, during which he stated that the Events of 1915 must be characterized as genocide.[1] However, the text of the resolution itself contains ambiguous wording regarding the characterization of the Events of 1915 and stresses that Turkey bears no moral or historical responsibility for these events.[2]

Various reactions have been shown towards the said resolution:

Turkey has reacted strongly against the resolution adopted by the Belgian House of Representatives.[3] The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has expressed that this resolution distorts historical facts and disregards the law. The Ministry has pointed out that this resolution is an attempt at smearing Turkish identity and history, and that a smear campaign has been taking place against Turkish identity and history in Belgium since the beginning of 2015. Furthermore, the Ministry has highlighted the fact that such attempts do not in any way further the Turkish-Armenian reconciliation process.

The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the other hand, has welcomed this resolution.[4] Reminding that the Belgian Senate and Government has in the past recognized the Armenian genocide, the Ministry has indicated that the Belgian House of Representatives latest resolution has completed this process of recognition. The Ministry has pointed out that with the latest resolution, both the Belgian legislative and executive bodies have unconditionally recognized the Armenian genocide.

The opposition in the Belgian parliament, however, has shown its reaction against this resolution.[5] The opposition has stated that the resolution should have been worded in a harsher and clearer manner.

The Armenian diaspora in Belgium has likewise expressed its disappointment with the resolution.[6] Its disappointment stems from the fact that it had requested that resolution be accusatory towards Turkey in its wording, and for it to indicate that Turkey is held to be directly responsible for the Events of 1915.

Despite the indirect character of the text of the resolution adopted by the Belgian House of Representatives, it nevertheless gives space to the words of the Belgian prime minister who has adopted the Armenian discourse regarding the Events of 1915. As such, the House of Representatives has placed itself in the category of parliaments that characterize the Events of 1915 as genocide.

As mentioned many times before, such parliament resolutions have no legal or historical validity whatsoever. The members of parliament who adopt such resolutions do not possess the necessary historical or legal knowledge that would be required to pass judgement on the Events of 1915. In the framework of the 1948 UN Genocide Convention, no parliament has the authority to characterize any historical event as genocide.

Such parliament resolutions are adopted for purely political intentions. In terms of foreign politics, the intention is to verbally harass Turkey and to place it under pressure. In terms of domestic politics, the intention is to satisfy the electorate with Armenian heritage who live in Western countries, and also to capitalize on the Turcophobia and Islamophobia that is prevalent in the Western world. With such resolutions, the intention is to create a public opinion that is against Turkey regarding the Events of 1915. Furthermore, with such resolutions, the aim is to instill a sense of legitimacy to the Armenian genocide claims, which in reality are devoid of any sort legal and historical validity.

Turkey has expressed its reaction to the Belgian House of Representatives resolution with a clarity and resolve that leaves no room for hesitation. It is certain that this reaction will have consequences. As of now, Turkeys agenda is filled with such issues as tackling the terrorism instigated by groups such as DEASH (ISIS) and PKK. However, it should be known that, even in the year 2015 (the centenary of 1915) and despite the psychological effect that the centenary creates, Turkey has achieved success with its justified and resolved stance. As can be seen from the case of the Belgian parliament, the flare-up will not turn into a wildfire.

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[2] Génocide arménien: le Parlement belge appelle à la réconciliation, *i24news.tv*, http://www.i24news.tv/fr/actu/international/europe/79484-150724-genocide-armenien-le-parlement-belge-appelle-a-la-reconciliation ; Also see: Génocide arménien: les jeunes Arméniens de Belgique déçus de la résolution commémorant le génocide, *RTL.be*, http://www.rtl.be/info/belgique/politique/genocide-armenien-les-jeunes-armeniens-de-belgique-decus-de-la-resolution-commemorant-le-genocide-741055.aspx

[3] No: 211, 24 July 2015, Press Release Regarding the Decision on the 1915 Events,

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[4] Armenia welcomes Belgiums unconditional recognition of Armenian Genocide, *Armradio.am*,http://www.armradio.am/en/2015/07/24/armenia-welcomes-belgiums-unconditional-recognition-of-armenian-genocide/

[5] Voici la résolution sur le génocide arménien, *LeSoir.be*,

http://www.lesoir.be/917531/article/actualite/belgique/2015-06-24/voici-resolution-sur-genocide-armenien

[6] Armenians of Belgium criticize resolution on Armenian Genocide, *News.am*, http://news.am/eng/news/278503.html ; Also see: La résolution sur le génocide arménien ne satisfait pas la communauté arménienne de Belgique, *LeVif.be*,

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