



*Ambassador
Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Turkey*

Geneva, 26 November 2014

Dear Mr Chair,

We follow with appreciation the Seventh Session of the Forum on Minority Issues, which fulfills a major task in promoting and protecting the rights of minorities that deserve support and solidarity of the international community. We are convinced that the Forum's focused guidance and specific recommendations are among its most important assets.

Despite the Forum's well-defined framework covering the rights of minorities, we were disappointed to see that some participants tried to abuse this valuable platform for their ulterior motives. Yesterday the reference made to the tragic events of 1915, as well as the allusion to the Armenian community of the Ottoman Empire as "second-class citizens" by the representative of the Permanent Mission of Armenia constitute an unfortunate example of taking advantage of the Forum for expressing unfounded allegations which are completely irrelevant to its work.

Turkey shares the sorrow of, and exerts efforts to empathize with the Armenian people who suffered in the early twentieth century under the conditions of the First World War. It is with these considerations that on 23 April 2014, the then Prime Minister of Turkey, His Excellency Mr Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the current President of the Republic of Turkey, issued a historic message concerning the Armenian losses in 1915.

I would like to recall that "genocide" is a very serious and distinct category of crime clearly defined by international law. Therefore, qualifying an event as genocide cannot be reduced to a matter of belief. It requires the language of knowledge, not conviction. The 1948 Convention tells us what genocide is and how it can be ascertained. Furthermore, there is neither legal nor scholarly consensus as to the nature of those events.

We believe that driving animosity from history by trying to imprint on others an incriminating and one-sided view of the past and calling for selective compassion is not the proper way of respecting the memory of many Turks, Armenians and others who lost their lives during the First World War.

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We need a just memory, one that can be duly built upon factual and scholarly data. With this understanding, Turkey offered the establishment of a "Joint History Commission" back in 2005, which remains on the table. We would have been on a different stage if this offer were to be accepted.

On the other hand, I wish to underline the fact that, trying to establish a link between Turkey and the events in Kassab is no more than a futile attempt of distorting the reality and it is therefore totally unfounded. Expansive efforts by Turkey aiming to assist the people of Syria regardless of any ethnic or religious consideration are recognized and appreciated by the international community as a whole.

In this regard, it will be appreciated if this communication could be published on the webpage of the Seventh Session of the Forum on Minority Issues as a response to the above-mentioned intervention.

Please accept, Mr Chair, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Mehmet Ferden ÇARIKÇI