AGAIN ABOUT THE SUB-COMMISSION

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A few days from now the signing of the Protocols might be a fact, barring a miraculous act in the eleventh hour that may derail the process. Much is said about the objectionable provisions on either side of the border. Political rallies, protests, petitions dotted the various Armenian communities in the Diaspora. Angry Diasporans took to the streets in Paris, New York, Los Angeles and Beirut, but the signatory parties seem to be undaunted.



One pivotal aspect that the Diasporan Armenians objected to most, and struck a very sensitive cord, was the inclusion of provisions related to a sub-commission to study historical matters. Irrespective of how the actual phrase was worded and whatever interpretations were provided in defence of such a commission, people did not buy. For them it meant one and one thing only. It will undoubtedly deal with matters related to the Genocide of the Armenians, which is not negotiable.

Abdullah Gul, the Turkish President of Turkey in a recent interview to Agence France Press reiterated, "What we hope is that historians, archive specialists study this matter and we are ready to accept the conclusions of this commission. To show that we are sincere, we even said that if a third country is interested in this matter, if French historians, for example, want to take part in this commission, they are welcome."

Since the day Turkey made the proposal for a historical commission in 2005, some progressive Turkish thinkers have looked at it in a positive way. They include scholars who are in the forefront of bringing to surface the dark pages of the Ottoman history. They have organized or taken part in various conferences devoted to the Genocide of the Armenians. They have argued that a commission of historians would after all boost the public acceptance of the facts.

Some have even gone further. They have stated that probably this is the starting point for the Turkish authorities to pave the way to a final acknowledgement. After all, decades of silence about the subject is not going to dissipate overnight. There needs to be a process, which is acceptable to the Turkish public; whereas, resolutions of various foreign legislatures have generated resentment rather than acceptance.

For a moment, let us take the statements of the Turkish president and the scholars at face value and try to look at the provision for a historical sub commission in a positive spin.

No matter how hard one tries, it looks very bizarre within the context of what took place in the past four years preceding the protocols and what the actual practice is in Turkey today. The professed

goodwill of the President and the interpretations or suggestions of the scholars do not match realities at all.

How can the Turkish government project sincerity about the subject when in reality it has reinforced rejectionist policies with consequent punishment? While professing to abide by the outcome of the deliberations of the commission, it ignores the distribution of CDs to young Turks depicting Armenians killing Turks, thus promoting hatred and inculcating views which are contrary to what is being professed? More importantly, if the Turkish authorities were really serious and sincere why have they not repealed article 301 of the penal code of the Republic yet? Instead, it continues to be in place in full force. Writers, historians, artists, journalists, and scholars at large are prosecuted in broad daylight for just mentioning the word Genocide.

Don't people see the contradiction? Apparently some don't; even the most learned of them. How do you then expect the lay people in Turkey to understand and accept what has happened a century ago? Layers and layers of ignorance has been deliberately promoted by the state apparatus, on top of that generating a new wave of hatred.

How do you expect scholars within Turkey to be impartial and free of fear to document what they find under these abhorrent circumstances?

Your acts Mr. President do not correspond at all, to what you profess. First, repeal Article 301, guarantee the safety of your scholars, stop prosecuting, maiming and killing them such as you did to Hrant Dink, before we believe in any of your words.

Put your house in order, prior to insisting on such a commission to study in your view "contentious" matters. Nobody believes you anyway, but geopolitics is in your favor now.