

AKCAM: OBAMA SHOULD RECOGNIZE GENOCIDE AND LIBERATE TURKS AND ARMENIANS

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By Khatchig Mouradian, editor *The Armenian Weekly*, 24 March 2009

WORCESTER, Mass. (A.W.)—On March 19, prominent Turkish-born genocide scholar Taner Akcam delivered his inaugural lecture at Clark University titled, "Facing History: Denial and the Turkish National Security Concept." In 2008, Akcam was appointed the Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marion Mugar Chair in Armenian Genocide Studies at Clark University.

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Speaking to an audience that had packed the Tilton Hall of the Higgins University Center, Akcam sent a powerful message to U.S. President Barack Obama, asking him to liberate Turks and Armenians by properly recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

Talking about the reluctance of Congress and some former U.S. presidents to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide, Akcam said, "here's an ongoing theatrical drama—perhaps 'comedy' would be a better term—that all the parties engage in every year, and that has started to grow old. It's time to end this dishonorable play-acting." He explained how every time a U.S. president or Congress has the issue of the genocide on their table, "They end up denying for one day what they believe the other 364 days of the year."

Akcam continued, "All of the parties involved know very well what the U.S. administration and Congress think about 1915. But Turkey asks them to tell a lie only for one day. I have never understood why the Turkish government extracts so much joy out of making the United States lie for one day. I also find it completely dishonorable. Not only does this lie fail to lead to a resolution, it needlessly locks up the debate."

Hence, Akcam argued, the importance of official U.S. recognition of the Armenian Genocide—"if the United States declares what it believes to be the truth and stands behind it"—would not only gain it "some self-respect on the subject, but it will liberate Turks, Armenians, and itself in the process."

Akcam ended his lecture by asking Obama to stand up for truth. "I believe that we will enter a new era where morality and real politik will not be considered mutually exclusive, if President Obama should put an end to this lingering problem and liberate everybody in the process by an official acknowledgment of genocide," he said.

Obama, both as a Senator and a presidential candidate, was an outspoken advocate for proper U.S.

reaffirmation of the Armenian Genocide. He repeatedly called on former president George W. Bush to recognize the genocide and expressed reservations over the firing of U.S. Ambassador to Armenia John Marshall Evans for his remarks recognizing that crime. In January 2008, Obama issued a campaign statement, noting that "America deserves a leader who speaks truthfully about the Armenian Genocide and responds forcefully to all genocides. I intend to be that President."

The complete statement may be read at [Barack Obama on the Importance of US-Armenia Relations](#)

Last week, Representatives Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), George Radanovich (R-Calif.), Frank Pallone (D-N.J.), and Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) were joined by 70 of their House Colleagues in the introduction of Armenian Genocide legislation (H.Res.252) calling on the president to recognize the Armenian Genocide. That resolution is identical to the one introduced in the previous Congress, which was adopted by the House Foreign Affairs Committee by a vote of 27 to 21, and had over 200 co-sponsors.

