ARMENIANS, ASSYRIANS, GREEKS, KURDS KNOW TURKEY'S TRUE FACE

Posted on April 3, 2015 by Keghart



Category: Opinions

Siranush Ghazanchyan, Gagrule, 6 April 2015

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Not surprisingly, two days later, Bashar Jaafari, Syria's Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, made a similar remark: "How about the Armenian Genocide where 1.5 million people were killed?"

The only other high ranking Syrian official who has acknowledged the Armenian Genocide was Abd al-Qader Qaddura, Speaker of the Syrian Parliament, when he inscribed a poignant statement in the Book of Remembrance of the Armenian Genocide Monument and Museum in Yerevan on July 16, 2001: "As we visit the Memorial and Museum of the Genocide that the Armenian nation suffered in 1915, we stand in full admiration and respect in front of those heroes that faced death with courage and heroism. Their children and grandchildren continued after them to immortalize their courage and struggle…. With great respect we bow our heads in memory of the martyrs of the Armenian nation — our friends — and hail their ability for resoluteness and triumph. We will work together to liberate every human being from aggression and oppression."

While the Parliament Speaker's 2001 statement was a candid and heartfelt message with no political

overtones, the same cannot be said about Pres. Assad's words on the Armenian Genocide as he clearly intended to lash back at the Turkish government's hostile actions against the Syrian regime. It is well known that Turkey has played a major role in the concerted international effort to topple Pres. Assad, by dispatching heavy weapons and arranging the infiltration of foreign radical Islamist fighters into Syria.

Relations between Syria and Turkey were not always hostile. Before the start of the Syrian crisis in 2011, the two countries were such close political and economic allies that the Assad regime banned the sale of books on the Armenian Genocide, and did not permit foreign film crews to visit Der Zor, the killing fields of thousands of Armenians during the Genocide. Mindful of possible Turkish backlash, Pres. Assad's staff cancelled my courtesy meeting with the President in 2009 after they discovered on the internet my countless critical articles on Turkey. Moreover, during the honeymoon period between the Syrian and Turkish governments, Pres. Assad advised the visiting Catholicos Aram I that Armenians should maintain good relations with Turkey and not dwell on the past!

In his recent interview with AFP, Pres. Assad also complained about the failure of Western leaders to comprehend developments in the Middle East: "They are always very late in realizing things, sometimes even after the situation has been overtaken by a new reality that is completely different." Frankly, one could make the same criticism about Pres. Assad for realizing at his own detriment only too late the dishonesty and duplicity of Turkey's leadership.
Regrettably, the Syrian President is not the only head of state who has failed to decipher the scheming mindset of Turkey's rulers. Countless Middle Eastern, European, and American leaders have made the same mistake, trusting Turkey's feigned friendship, only to be let down when the time came for Turkey to keep its end of the bargain.
In recent months, with the increasing dissatisfaction of the international community with Prime Minister Erdogan's autocratic policies and belligerent statements, it has become crystal clear that no one knows the true face of Turkey better than Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks and Kurds, who have suffered countless brutalities, massacres and even genocide under despotic Turkish rule.

Despite Pres. Assad's political motivations, Armenians should welcome his belated statement on the Armenian Genocide. After refraining from acknowledging the Genocide for all the wrong reasons for so long, at least now the Syrian President is on record telling the truth about past and present Turkish atrocities!