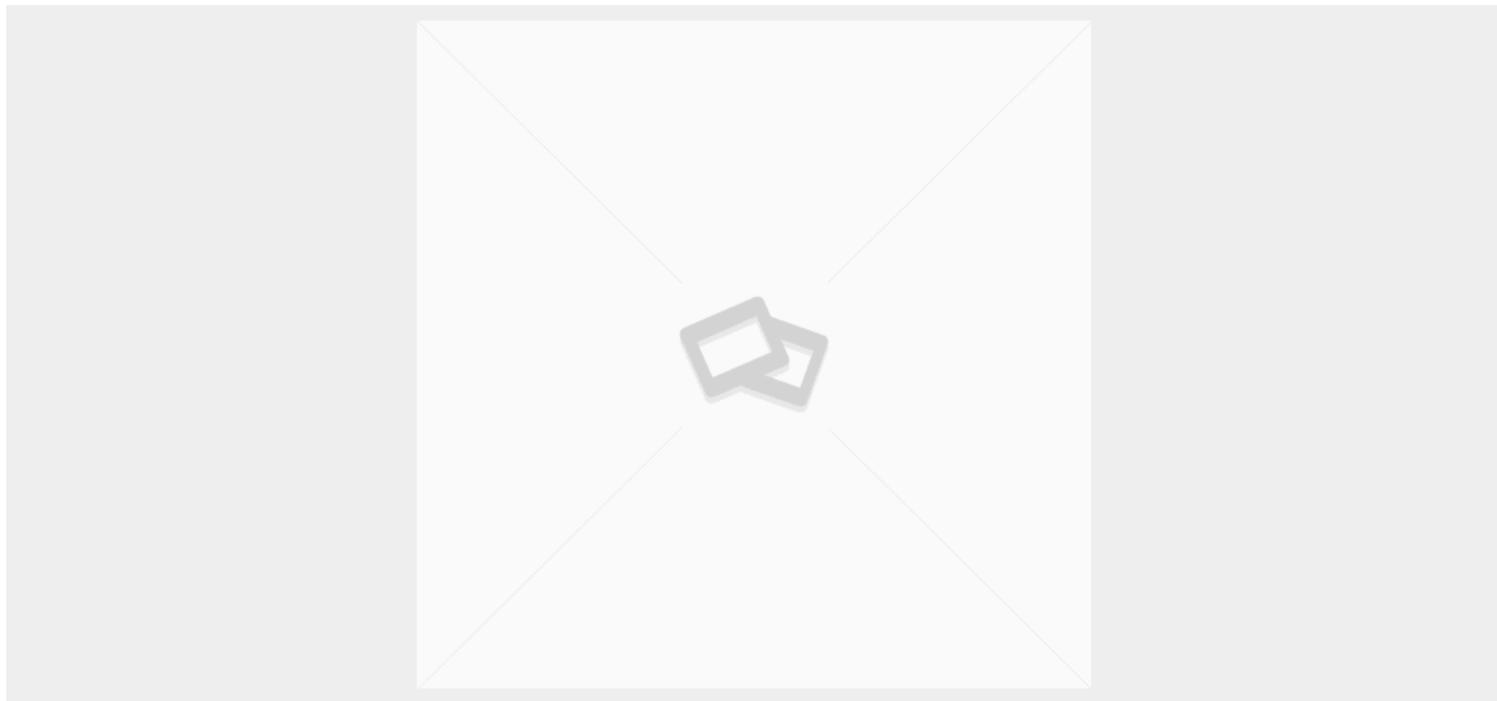


# ARMENIANS DEMAND JUSTICE, NOT RECOGNITION

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By Harut Sassounian, Publisher of *The California Courier*, 6 Dec. 2007

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The Armenian Cause is not about genocide recognition, but the pursuit of justice which entails that the Armenian victims receive reparations.

Remembering the Genocide is also about keeping the hope and dream alive for succeeding generations of Armenians - that some day, they will regain their historic lands.

Armenians need to rethink their approach to the pursuit of their cause and present their demands in a more effective manner. The House of Representatives has already adopted an Armenian Genocide resolution twice in 1975 and 1984. Pres. Reagan issued a Presidential Proclamation in 1981 that refers to the Armenian Genocide. More than 20 countries, the European Parliament, a U.N. human rights panel and many genocide and Holocaust scholars have acknowledged the Armenian Genocide. Therefore, continuing attempts to seek genocide recognition from the international community is no longer necessary and distracts from the pursuit of more significant Armenian political objectives.

Armenians have been saying for decades that they have three demands: "Recognition" of the genocide, "Reparations" for losses, and "Return" of their territories -- in that sequence. They have repeated these three R's so often that even Turkey's leaders, who closely monitor Armenian statements, have learned them by heart.

Consequently, Armenians and Turks now have the same distorted view of what the Armenian Cause is all about. Both sides mistakenly believe that once the Genocide is recognized by Turks and others, Armenians will proceed to make demands for reparations and lands. This is the main reason why Turks so adamantly refuse to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide. They fear that acceptance of the Genocide would obligate them to pay reparations and return the usurped Armenian lands. And knowing well the sequence of the three R's, Turks cleverly refuse to acknowledge the Genocide -- the first demand -- thus preempting the remaining two Armenian demands.

Armenians should not fall in the Turkish trap of getting stuck on demand number one. Since genocide recognition has already been accomplished, they should immediately proceed to the second and third demands. There is no prerequisite that the Turks -- or the U.S. or anybody else, for that matter -- first acknowledge the Genocide before Armenians can take legal action. Armenians should present their demands to appropriate national and international courts, regardless of whether the Turks recognize the Genocide.

Is justice served when someone murders your family, and the criminal's descendants who still live on your property simply admit 100 years later that such a crime actually occurred? Would you just thank the murderer's descendants for acknowledging the crime or would you press to get your family's stolen property back?

The acknowledgment of the Genocide by Turks or others is not an occasion for Armenians to jump for joy. Genocide is an undeniable fact. Armenians know it happened. The civilized world knows it happened. Many Turks also know it happened. The acknowledgment of a historical fact cannot be viewed as a demand. Justice requires that the criminal be punished, reparations paid, and the ill-gotten fruits gained through genocide returned to their rightful owners.

Obviously, the Turks are not going to voluntarily return the Armenian lands even though Armenians have a just claim to those territories. Nobody gives an inch of land to anyone unless forced to do so. So how does such a claim become reality? It can be done by keeping the hope and dream alive and passing them on to the next generation, the way the Jews did by proclaiming "Next year in Jerusalem" for two thousand years. The just demand for the recovery of their historic lands can disappear once Armenians lose all hope and unilaterally give up their dream.

There is no country in recorded history whose borders have remained unchanged. Mighty empires have come and gone. Likewise, the Republic of Turkey will not have the same borders forever. No one knows what can happen in the next 30 years or 300 years, but if Armenians relinquish their claims now, they would have lost the chance of recovering anything forever. Armenians must continue to remind their offspring for generations to come that those lands which were unjustly stolen from them will eventually return to their rightful owners.

Rather than demanding genocide recognition, Armenians should seek justice.

