

CANADIAN TURKS SHOULD CONDEMN, NOT CONDONE, GENOCIDE DENIAL

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By Harut Sassounian, Publisher, The California Courier, 9 January 2014

Canadian Turks launched a petition last month seeking the removal of all references to the Armenian Genocide from the 11th grade curriculum of Toronto high schools.

This petition is a part of Turkish denialists' long-standing efforts to reverse the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) 2008 decision to educate students about the Armenian, Jewish, and Rwandan genocides. TDSB's action follows the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the Canadian Senate in 2002 and the House of Commons in 2004. In addition, since 2006, successive Canadian Prime Ministers have issued official annual statements acknowledging the Armenian Genocide, despite intensive political pressure and economic blackmail by the Turkish government.



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Back in 2008, a similar Turkish petition failed to sway TDSB to amend the genocide curriculum, after gathering over 11,000 signatures, mostly from Turkey. Indeed, the Ankara government and its Turkish proxies in Toronto have done everything possible during the past seven years to undermine this curriculum.

Below are the baseless claims made by the Turkish petition against TDSB's genocide curriculum, followed by my rebuttal:

Turkish Petition: "As the Turkish/Turkic speaking parents of students attending the Toronto District School Board, we are deeply concerned about the negative impact of the current curriculum module on 'Armenian Genocide' and the learning resources adopted by the Board since 2008."

My response: There has been NO violence or intimidation against a single Turkish student in Toronto schools even though the genocide curriculum has been taught there for several years. The reason is that Armenians do not hold today's Turks responsible for the crimes committed by the Government of Ottoman Turkey almost 100 years ago, except those who associate themselves with these crimes

by their denial. The Republic of Turkey, on the other hand, as successor to the Ottoman Empire, is responsible for the continuing consequences of the Armenian Genocide. Denying the facts of the Genocide has a far more serious negative psychological impact on Armenians than its inclusion in the curriculum on Turks. Furthermore, the truth cannot be concealed in order not to offend the sensibilities of those who wish to cover up historical facts. Would anyone advocate erasing all references to the Jewish Holocaust from history books so as not to offend present-day Germans?

Turkish Petition: "The textbook on the Genocide of the Armenians and other readers, such as Barbara Coloroso's Extraordinary Evil, unremittingly discredits one community's narrative over the other; and, adversely affects the students of TDSB with Turkish and Turkic heritages."

My response: There cannot be two narratives or two versions of the proven facts of the Armenian Genocide. There can only be one version -- the truth!

Turkish Petition: "We firmly believe that the values of mutual respect, understanding and peaceful coexistence can be achieved through an honest and open dialogue on history. Moreover, fair and unprejudiced learning should be based on historical facts and not solely on the narratives of select communities while ignoring others. It should also be noted that there are no court decisions on any of these historical claims and the opinions of historians differ regarding the details and the definitions of these events."

My response: 'Mutual respect, understanding and peaceful coexistence' cannot be achieved through distortions and lies. Only after acknowledging the truth and making appropriate amends, Canadian Turks can talk about such lofty ideals. Furthermore, contrary to the Turkish claims, there are several court verdicts on the Armenian Genocide, starting with the Turkish Military Tribunals of 1919, and judgments by Argentinean, Swiss, and U.S. courts. Significantly, the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities adopted in 1985 a report acknowledging the Armenian Genocide. The ultimate arbiter of any genocide is the United Nations, since the Genocide Convention is a UN document.

To sum up, this latest Turkish petition is a total failure since its initiator, the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations, has so far collected less than 2,000 signatures out of a claimed membership of 200,000 in Canada. Interestingly, most of the signatories are not from Canada, but Turkey where the petition has been widely circulated.

A more worthwhile initiative for Canadian Turks would be to start a petition urging the Turkish government to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide and make proper restitution to the descendants of this heinous crime on the occasion of the Genocide's Centennial.

