COME BACK, DIYARBAKIR MAYOR TELLS ARMENIANS

Posted on September 28, 2012 by keghart.com



Category: Opinions

İpek Yezdani, Hürriyet Daily News, 27 September 2012

Diyarbakır's BDP-member mayor issues a call for exiled Armenians to 'return to their city' following the 1915 events while condemning the massacres as 'cruelty'

The mayor of Diyarbakir Metropolitan Municipality has invited all Armenians and other non-Muslim peoples whose ancestors were born in the southeastern province before being forced to flee during the 1915 events to return to the city.

"An Armenian, an Assyrian and a Chaldean, whose grandfathers or great-grandfathers were born in Diyarbakır, have the same right to live in Diyarbakır as I have, as a Kurdish person who was born in Diyarbakır. I would like to invite all the ethnic groups whose ancestors lived in Diyarbakır back to Diyarbakır again. Come back to your city," Osman Baydemir told Turkish and Armenian journalists on Sept. 25 on the sidelines of a roundtable conference called "Expanding the Scope of Dialogue: Media and Armenia-Turkey Relations at the Current Stage" that was organized by the Yerevan Press Club in Diyarbakır.

İpek Yezdani, Hürriyet Daily News, 27 September 2012

Diyarbakır's BDP-member mayor issues a call for exiled Armenians to 'return to their city' following the 1915 events while condemning the massacres as 'cruelty'

The mayor of Diyarbakir Metropolitan Municipality has invited all Armenians and other non-Muslim peoples whose ancestors were born in the southeastern province before being forced to flee during the 1915 events to return to the city.

"An Armenian, an Assyrian and a Chaldean, whose grandfathers or great-grandfathers were born in Diyarbakır, have the same right to live in Diyarbakır as I have, as a Kurdish person who was born in Diyarbakır. I would like to invite all the ethnic groups whose ancestors lived in Diyarbakır back to Diyarbakır again. Come back to your city," Osman Baydemir told Turkish and Armenian journalists on Sept. 25 on the sidelines of a roundtable conference called "Expanding the Scope of Dialogue: Media and Armenia-Turkey Relations at the Current Stage" that was organized by the Yerevan Press Club in Diyarbakır.

Kurds, Armenians, Chaldeans, Yezidis and all the ethnic groups that once lived in Diyarbakır took part in the construction of Diyarbakır's city walls, Baydemir said. "So all of these people have a right to this city."

According to "Talat Paşa's Black Book," written by the historian Murat Bardakçı, there were 56,166 Armenians living in Diyarbakır before the events of 1915. Baydemir also said "he curses the cruelty of 1915 within his conscience." "We refuse the legacy of our grandfathers, who took part in this massacre , we refuse to be a part of what they lived, and we commemorate those of our

grandfathers who were opposed to this massacre and cruelty," said Baydemir, who is from the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), which is focused on the Kurdish issue.

Many researchers have said the ruling Party of Union and Progress during the Ottoman Empire used Kurdish militias known as the "Hamidiye troops" against the Armenians in the events of 1915.

"Denying the crimes that were committed by some of our grandfathers would be the same as becoming a part of . We first have to accept the sufferings of the people in order to be able to heal the wounds," the mayor said.

Baydemir said one of his biggest dreams was to construct a common monument in memory of all of those who were lost in the region, including Armenians, Turks, Kurds, Assyrians and Chaldeans up until the 1930s. "I would like to visit this monument with Turks, Armenians and Kurds all together and cry for our lost ones all together. Turks, Kurds, Persians, Arabs – we all have to succeed in negotiation and dialogue in order to be able to live with each other."

Armenians Snub Mayor's Call for Return

Vercihan Ziflioğlu, Hürriyet Daily News, 28 September 2012

Prominent members of Armenian diaspora reject Diyarbakır Mayor's invitation to Armenians whose ancestors were forced to flee in 1915 to return to the city

Diyarbakır Mayor Baydemir's call for return fails to convince Armenians.DAILY NEWS photo
Various well-known names among the Armenian diaspora have reacted negatively Diyarbakır Mayor Osman Baydemir recent invitation to Armenians and other non-Muslim peoples, whose ancestors lived in the southeastern province before they were forced to flee during the events of 1915, to return to the city.

Ara Sarafyan, the director of the Gomidas Institute in London, and whose family's origins lie in the Turkish provinces of Yozgat and Elazığ, was among those to react to Baydemir's invitation.

"Baydemir's call is not enough. And what is more, it could be manipulated by the Turkish nationalists.

Even though the intention is good, Baydemir is a politician above all," Sarafyan said, adding that a considerable part of the diaspora has its origins in Diyarbakır. "As in most provinces, Armenians were also massacred in Diyarbakır. Why should they return to the city they left with great pain?"

"An Armenian, an Assyrian and a Chaldean, whose grandfathers or great-grandfathers were born in Diyarbakır, have the same right to live in Diyarbakır as I have, as a Kurdish person who was born in Diyarbakır. I would like to invite all the ethnic groups whose ancestors once lived in Diyarbakır back to Diyarbakır again. Come back to your city," Baydemir said, addressing Turkish and Armenian journalists on Sept. 25 on the sidelines of a roundtable conference called "Expanding the Scope of Dialogue: Media and Armenia-Turkey Relations at the Current Stage," organized by the Yerevan

Press Club in Diyarbakır.

“I don’t believe it is a serious and sincere call. It has no meaning for us; no one could come back. What would we find out about ourselves if we returned? I would of course want to return the land where my ancestors were born, but it is not possible under such conditions,” Suzanne Khardalian, a film director currently residing in Stockholm whose family comes from Adıyaman and Maraş, said.

‘Why Diyarbakır?’

Garo Yalick, who currently lives in France but whose family has origins in Van and Mardin, said the call did not make any sense to him.

“They only remember to call on Armenian when they are faced with political problems. So I want to ask: Why should we come back?” Yalick said.

The Armenian press also criticized Diyarbakır’s being chosen for the “Turkey-Armenia Relations” conference organized by the Yerevan Press Club and chaired by Boris Navasartyan, because the Kurdish issue is so intensely felt in the city.

A column about Baydemir’s invitation, asking “Why Diyarbakır?” was published by Hagop Çakıryan, a columnist for the Armenian newspaper Azg who specializes in Turkey.

“Diyarbakır is being introduced as the capital city of North Kurdistan, while Osman Baydemir is regarded as the Kurdistan Workers’ Party’s representative. Baydemir is also seen as an enemy in political circles in Turkey,” Çakıryan’s column read.

The fact that Sunday’s meeting’s was held in Diyarbakır would not be useful for the dialogue between the two countries, Çakıryan told the Hürriyet Daily News. “Diyarbakır is a city associated with the Kurdish problem. It must be the last place to go in terms of Turkey-Armenia relations. While the Yerevan Press Club chair was saying this meeting would contribute to Turkey-Armenia relations, Baydemir both underlined the events of 1915 and made a call for the return ,” Çakıryan said.