

# ERDOGAN SAYS IT WAS NOT GENOCIDE

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## Because Not All Armenians Were Killed

By Harut Sassounian, [The California Courier](#), 8 May 2014

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When asked by veteran reporter Charlie Rose if it would be possible for the Turkish Prime Minister to characterize these killings as genocide, Erdogan became the laughing stock of TV viewers worldwide by declaring: "It would not be possible, because if such a genocide occurred, would there have been any Armenians living in this country?"

It is greatly embarrassing that the leader of a major country like Turkey is clueless about the universally-accepted definition of genocide. Foreign Minister Davutoglu (a former professor) and other learned Turks must have cringed watching their Prime Minister expose his ignorance before millions of TV viewers!

Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 9, 1948, defines genocide as "acts committed with the intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such."

One does not have to be a genocide scholar to comprehend that it is not necessary to wipe out every single member of a particular group to be accused of committing genocide. Did Hitler manage to kill all German Jews? Would Erdogan dare to go on American Television and make a similarly

outrageous remark about the Jewish Holocaust, claiming that it is not genocide because some Jews are living in Germany today? In a fitting response to Erdogan, Armenia's Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian urged him to follow Germany's example of Holocaust acknowledgment through "recognition, condemnation, and apology." Nalbandian should have also added 'restitution' -- an imperative demand --- without which the rest are hollow words.

Erdogan should be reminded that only a few days earlier he had called for a joint commission to study the 'historical facts'. What is the point of asking for a study, if he has already concluded that there was no genocide? The Prime Minister cannot be serious and he definitely is not sincere!

At the end of his interview with Charlie Rose, Erdogan made additional contradictory statements, shifting the blame for the genocide to the Ottomans: "This is not something that happened during the Republic of Turkey. This was during the Ottoman Empire.... If the documents show that our ancestors made a mistake...if the historians can show that, then we would pay whatever consequence of that is."

While no one in Armenia and Diaspora was fooled by Erdogan's deceptive statements, the reaction of some Armenians in Turkey was understandably more accommodating. Archbishop Aram Ateshian, Vicar General of the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul, rushed to Ankara with his entourage for a 'pleasant' chat with the Turkish Prime Minister and a congenial lunch with Foreign Minister Davutoglu. Abp. Ateshian thanked the Turkish leaders for their expression of "shared pain" in reference to Armenians and Turks who died during World War I.

Such laudatory words are not surprising, given the Armenians' status in Turkey as hostages of an authoritarian and brutal regime, as journalist Hrant Dink found out by paying with his life for bearing witness to the truth of the Genocide. Some Turkish Armenians, however, have learned to manipulate the country's oligarchic system for their personal gain. They are willing to go along with Turkish genocide denialism to enrich themselves through covert business deals with government officials and/or secure their leadership positions in the local Armenian community. Indeed, several prominent Turkish-Armenians have suggested that Erdogan be nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for his April 23rd statement! Two Armenian businessmen have even placed self-deprecating ads in Turkish newspapers thanking the Prime Minister and offering apologies for the Turkish 'deaths' during World War One!

At the end of the day, it matters not what Erdogan's statement or Davutoglu's op-ed in The Guardian say or don't say about the Armenian Genocide. The more fundamental question is: are Turkish officials willing to atone for the crimes committed by their ancestors against the Armenian people? What matters most for Armenians is restitution and justice, not empty rhetoric! Erdogan's words are too little and too late. His statement is simply a clever ploy at damage control given the growing sentiments and calls worldwide to accept responsibility for the Armenian Genocide, and to deflect attention away from the scandals swirling around Turkey and its Prime Minister.

