

HEMSHINS TO FORM NEW PARTY IN TURKEY

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Vercihan Ziflioglu, [Hürriyet Daily News](#), 16 May 2011



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The Hemşin were originally Armenians who fled to the Pontus region along the eastern Black Sea as Arab troops occupied their homeland in 790. In 1480 the Ottomans conquered the area and in 1600 instituted the "devşirme," in which suitable young boys were taken from Christian families to be educated. The Christians in the region often converted to Islam to get rid of the "devşirme" and other taxes that were applied to them.

"CHP and AKP are nationalists; BDP is becoming corrupt"

A total of seven Turkish-Armenians ran for seats in the parliament with the AKP, the CHP and the BDP, but all of them were left off the candidate list.

"It would have been naive to expect positive results. The AKP still uses the Armenian identity as a form of curse in tete a tete debates," said Şahin, who accused the ruling AKP and the main opposition CHP of nationalism, and then added that the Armenian community of Istanbul is still an inconsequential factor in Turkey's political and social structure.

"The presence of even a single Armenian deputy in parliament would remind Turkey of its history; it would force Turkey to face up to its own history. Turkey does not have the courage to face up to its

history," said Şahin.

"The BDP presents the Kurds and Turks as brothers in arms that fought against common enemies to protect the Republic, with the aim of gaining recognition from the state. The BDP is getting corrupt. Instead of aligning itself with other oppressed peoples, the BDP chose to go for an exclusively Kurdish constituency. In the past they had announced their support for me because I was from within the party and because I am a Hamshenite," said Şahin, adding that he found it meaningless for other people to lay so much stress on his Hamshenite identity.

"In recent years, more and more people have begun claiming they are discovering their Armenian identity, and I do not find this sincere. Hamshenites have always identified themselves as Hamshenites. If you ask whether they are Turks, you would elicit a negative response. If you ask whether they are Armenians, again you would elicit a negative response. They would only tell you they are Hamshenites," said Şahin.

