IMPORTED DENIALISTS FACE VARSITY CONTEMPT

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Category: Opinions

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Protestors gave the speakers the benefit of the doubt by listening to their opening remarks. However, when there was a clear intention to deny and misconstrue the factuality of the Armenian Genocide, the group stood up and turned their backs to the podium as silent protest against genocide denial.

Several racial slurs and discriminatory comments were directed to the protestors as they stood in silence.

Lecture organizers briefly stopped the event, but after campus police made it clear that the form of protest did not interfere with the event, they were asked to continue.

Protestors continued standing with their backs to the podium as Fein spoke, then marched out in an organized walk-out, leaving the remaining twenty or so attendees to listen to the remainder of the lecture.

The demonstrators then marched to the University of Toronto's Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office to voice their concern regarding the event and to deliver a petition of over 2,000 signatures denouncing the event and demanding that the university distance themselves from the organizers and speakers. The group had previously sent to the University a letter signed by multiple academics,

human rights groups and student associations including Hillel of Greater Toronto, the Greek Students Association of the University of Toronto-Scarborough and the Hellenic Students Association of Ryerson University, demanding that this event be cancelled.

Previously turned away from the University of Melbourne and Art Gallery of New South Wales in 2013, Justin McCarthy has long been regarded as a mouthpiece of the Turkish government to spread their denial of the Armenian Genocide. Bruce Fein is employed by the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA) as a resident scholar, to similarly support and propagate Turkish denial policy of the Armenian Genocide and has penned several articles attacking the legitimacy of the historical truth.

Armenian Youth Federation of Canada Chairperson Daron Keskinian said it was "extremely troubling" that such an event is happening on the University of Toronto campus.

"As we saw today, the University of Toronto should distance itself from this event immediately. The lecture organizers have used the location to bring legitimacy to their event and been given free rein to present their denial propaganda at the expense of the University's reputation," said Keskinian.

In a statement released by the Armenian Students Association of the University of Toronto, the organization made clear that this should be disconcerting to the University community at large.

"In the interest to maintain its integrity and making amends for this event taking place on campus, the University of Toronto's President's Office should release a statement indicating that they distance themselves from this event. The Armenian Genocide is taught at this institution and the University of Toronto should not provide podiums to those who are looking to legitimize their denial of the first genocide of the twentieth century," read a part of the statement.

2015 marks the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide and is being commemorated globally by countless organizations and governments. In 2004, the Canadian Parliament passed a resolution acknowledging the Armenian Genocide and condemning these crimes as crimes against humanity.

The Armenian Youth Federation of Canada condemns the fact that such malicious and hateful speech was allowed to take place in Canada's largest institution of higher-learning and demands that the University of Toronto speaks out against all forms of genocide denial.