KURDISH MP SELAHATTIN DEMITRAS' SPEECH IN TURKISH PARLIAMENT

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The following are excerpts from his speech quoted by Ayse Gunaysu in her article Kurdish MP Challenges Turkish Parliament on Armenian Genocide

- During the last period of the Ottoman Empire, in 1915-16, the Union and Progress Party systematically pursued a policy of extermination of the Christians who had been the native peoples of the country for centuries.

- No national security considerations can be an excuse for the annihilation of a population by means of forced displacement and massacres.

- Governments, in an effort to clear themselves of the guilt, resorted to denial and to distortion of historical facts to conceal the truth. They rewrote the history. In school books, Armenians are portrayed as hostile figures, exaggerating the incidents of violence by Armenian activists and never telling the truth about the massacred Armenians.

- The word 'Armenian' has been used as an insult in this country. Even the president of the Republic of Turkey was accused of having secret Armenian ancestors, as if this was a sin. They did this to humiliate him. And what a shame that the president himself answered this 'accusation' in such a way as to confirm the humiliating connotation of the word, by trying to prove that this was not true."

- Without doing this no real policy of peace can be pursued in foreign or domestic policy and no real resolution can be reached by ignoring the tragedy, by acting as if the loss of lives was a result of unwanted adverse circumstances.

- I know that what I say upsets those who remain loyal to the status quo. However for us to avoid recognizing historical truths just for the sake of the status quo would mean betraying our conscience and taking a politically unethical stance. So, Turkey should lead the way to uncover the historical facts instead of continuing to carry the burden of a tragedy caused by the Committee of Union and Progress.

- For truly friendly relations between the two countries, it should be acknowledged that this is the only way for mutual trust.