REFLECTIONS ON APRIL 24

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Category: Opinions

By Vicken Gulvartian, Los Angeles, 25 April 2010

The reasons why I'm convinced that I must persist with full awareness of the Armenian Genocide are rooted in my education, upbringing, and convictions. I would like to share some of them with you.
1- Because Prof. Vahakn Dadrian says so. The proofs of premeditation, intent to destroy, organization and execution of the Genocide are in his books, all based on archival documents. Turks are yet to produce a single evidence to prove their own twisted version of Ottoman deeds. Sadly, the fifth element to any crime is the cover-up, and more proofs are in documents hidden in storages by the Turkish government to this day. No one would love to get his hands on them more than Dadrian himself.

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2- The Turkish government. The more they lie, the more the world is determined to keep on asking them "the" question over and over again. (Note CNN's last interview with Turkish PM Erdogan, where the question of Genocide came up persistently during a brief 10 minute-long interview).
Turkish illusions of grandeur and regional superiority is a dangerous thing, and nothing serves them better that to face their own past, and be reminded by each line of questioning that they are not so great after all. The world will be a better place if Turkey was to calm down, look back, settle the affairs of the past, negotiate its place in the region, and only then venture out with the resemblance of founded claims to power.

3- Erdogan, Gul and Davutoglu. They are gung-ho to explain to the civilized world, that what happened in Turkey between 1915-1921 was (maybe) a massacre, and not a genocide ("we do not agree to this G word", they keep saying). They leave me no choice but to explain to them a comparative study on mass killings: A massacre is actually what happened in America during Depression-era Chicago in 1929, when the notorious mobster Al Capone gunned down mere six goons of an opposing gang in what became to be known as the St. Valentine's Day …Massacre. That

was a massacre! Also note that in 2004 the President of the United States referred to the killings in Darfur as… genocide, right when the deaths from that conflict had reached not the 1.5 million mark, but rather a much lower 300,000 mark. Now you make the connections.

4- Countries around the world are researching the history of man's cruelty towards man and… finding it, in the Armenian Genocide. Many others will permit the same questions, and come to answers where the truth is. As in Switzerland, other countries too, will join the ranks of civilized societies that will set into law the denial of the Armenian Genocide as a crime, and deniers as criminals.

5- The Genocide is part of the Armenian identity. We didn't ask for it, it was inflicted upon us. Identity is the basis upon which people design their own self-preservation. In our case, the Genocide is in the center of it.

We had to live with the Genocide for 95 years, we had no choice. And frankly the call to "move on with it" is not for politicians, businessmen or journalists to make. Those who promote that line of thinking are claiming for themselves a piece of luxury that they do not own. Individuals may make personal choices; nation on the other hand, can act only upon the collective experience, at least democratic ones do.

6- It's the neighborhood, dude. The leaders of Turkey are acting as if their country appeared on the world stage one day where there was no Armenia, and no Armenians or stories of Armenians in their eastern provinces. Not so. The story of Armenians and Turkey is not over yet. Our thousand-years-old dealings with each other have been disrupted and adulterated, but not eliminated. Armenians will feature in many vital Turkish issues and dealings in years to come, and Armenian demands will constantly be raised, sometimes by multitudes, other times by mere solitary voices. Turkey will choose to neglect, reject or abandon, and we already know that. We will be back another time to continue where we left off. We have the long view of history, after all we survived 600 years of Ottoman misery, and we learned a thing or two about enduring them.

7- As long as Turkey pursues a policy of denial, Genocide recognition remains Armenia's primary case for security vis-a-vis Turkey. The day Armenia relinquishes calls for human rights and Genocide recognition is the day Armenia will cease to value itself as a full nation. All legitimate nations with their unique place in the present arrangement of things, and a view of their future learn and grown from their own past. That's the enduring trait of all ancient civilizations, and ours is not different.

The Genocide as a human rights issue is Turkey's burden, and Armenia's salvation. Without it neither country will possess the future that they aspire to, independently of each other or together.

8- Our youth inspires me, and gives me hope. Attend any current-events function, and you will see them and meet them. Educated, savvy and eloquent, with no inhibitions to challenge the establishment, to ask questions, rally a crowd, or carry the message. These are the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the survivor generation, and the pursuit of "the cause" is theirs. I have full confidence in them. Their determination is contagious, and in time more will join them from an

emerging young educated class of Armenia. It is a matter of time.

9- For a significant part of the last 95 years Mr. Dadrian, as well as Richard Hovannisian, Peter Balakian and others have done immensely valuable work in documenting the Genocide, yet historians have barely entered the realm of the two most extensive archives not yet exposed: Turkish and German. There's work to be done.

10- It's personal. You bet it is!

I am intermittently reminded of my place in the world and a responsibility that comes to a descendant of the Genocide generation-- by my grandfather Mesrob Chinchinian of Marash and my grandmother Mari Manoushagian of Aintab; and my paternal grandparents Artin Gulvartian, who died on the evacuation route from Hajin to Adana, and his young wife Teshgouhi Saghdasarian who lamented his untimely death for the rest of her life.

I rest my case!