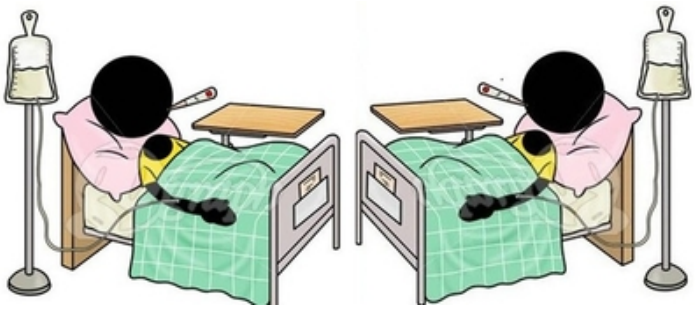
SICK PEOPLE

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Category: Opinions

Raffi Bedrosyan, Toronto, 20 May 2015

> ***Below is the translation of Mr. Bedrosyan's open letter published in the Turkish "Taraf" (May 13, 2015). It was the most widely read column of the day, and it has received tens of thousands of views and comments--positive and negative****.--Editor.*

Dear Mr. Erdogan and Mr. Davutoglu,

I am writing this open letter to you in response to your statements that if third parties do not interfere, Armenians and Turks would be able to have a more meaningful dialogue. Even though Mr. Davutoglu now says that Diaspora is full of hatred, anger and vengeance, he had declared in the past that 'the Armenian Diaspora is also our Diaspora'; therefore, as a Diaspora Armenian and a Turkish citizen, as well as someone who has spent time and energy on Turkish-Armenian issues, I have decided to share my thoughts.

We Armenians are a sick people, as long as Turkey denies the truths of 1915. We are stuck in 1915, and cannot get rid of the trauma of 1915. But as long as the Turkish state continues to hide and deny the truths of 1915, the Turkish people will remain even sicker. The ones who know the truth but deny and lie about it are sick. The ones who are not aware of the truth because they are brainwashed for four generations over a hundred years are also sick. It is up to you to continue or to end this sickness.

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and lie about it are sick. The ones who are not aware of the truth because they are brainwashed for four generations over a hundred years are also sick. It is up to you to continue or to end this sickness.

Yes, I admit I am sick. Just like hundreds of thousands of Armenian women, children and elderly men, my grandmother who lived in Bursa was also ordered to be deported in 1915, while pregnant, while her husband was serving in the Ottoman army. She gave birth to a baby boy near Konya, while walking with the rest of the deportation convoy. The baby, who would be my uncle, lasted ten days without food or water. My grandmother placed the dead baby under a rock, and continued walking while being clubbed by the gendarmes, all the way to Syria, over several months. She miraculously survived the ordeal and returned to Bursa after the war, but when she tried to enter her house, she was severely beaten by Muslim Turks who had already taken possession of her house. I wasn't told of these facts until I was eighteen, and no history textbooks in Turkey ever mentioned these facts. When I found out about these facts, I decided to leave Turkey and moved to Canada. The Armenian family, originally from Tokat, with whom I stayed temporarily made me even more sick. The elder Agop Dede, in his eighties, kept saying that he smells urine everyday. He told me that in 1915 while he was about four years old, the murderers of Teskilat-i Mahsusa (Special Organization of the Ottoman state) rounded up the Tokat Armenians. His mother hid him under her skirt, and while she was being beheaded, she urinated on him.
Ever since that day Agop Dede smelled urine every day of his life until his death. Almost every Armenian family in the Diaspora has a story like this from 1915, each one an undeniable historic fact. Almost every Armenian orphan who remained in Turkey and ended up being forcefully Islamized and Turkified as living victims of 1915, has a story like this, more undeniable facts.

I ask you: Did the Armenian women, children and elderly from Bursa, Tokat, or all corners of Anatolia and even Thrace, 'stabbed the Ottoman army in the back in the eastern war zone against the Russians', as you keep repeating? Did they join with the 'Imperialist states and tried to declare independence'? What kind of threat did these people pose to the state? Until when are you going to deceive your people and parrot the empty rhetoric of 'unavoidable losses during war conditions, more Muslims died than the Armenians, no massacres but just a required relocation, our common pain' ? When will you face and admit that the Ittihat Terakki government took wrong decisions, ended up losing an empire and caused the death of untold numbers of Muslims, attempted the destruction of the entire Armenian people who lived on their historic homeland for four thousand years, and plundered the entire assets and wealth of the eliminated Armenians? When will you admit and accept these facts? When? Is it the fear of returning the plundered assets that prevents you from accepting the facts? The dead body of the Armenian people is still on the ground in front of you, while you sit on its assets.
If we make a comparison with the present state of affairs, would it be acceptable for the Turkish state to round up, deport and murder all Kurdish women, children and elderly from all over Turkey,

just because the army cannot handle the PKK guerrilla movement? This is what the Ottoman state did to the Armenians in 1915. You will either call the murderers as 'murderers', or, as you did until now, will you continue to deny the murder and join the murderers, and blame everyone who asks you to face the historic facts as 'full of hatred, anger and vengeance', or accuse everyone as 'being murderers themselves'.

You keep saying 'We have opened our archives, let the Armenians also open theirs'. You know well this is not true. Let us leave aside the countless foreign state archives, documents, studies by international scholars, and just consider the honest, ethical Turkish scholars who have found enough facts of genocide from the Ottoman archives, which escaped the state attempts of scrutiny and elimination of any incriminating evidence. Aren't you aware of these Turkish publications? And yet, you are the ones who hide the two most critical archives. The 33 dossiers from 33 provinces which documented the names, numbers, dates of deported Armenians, the list of assets that they left behind, are all kept in the Turkish Prime Ministerial Archival Offices, if not already destroyed. The Turkish Army Chief of Staff ordered in 2005 a ban on the translation and publication of Ottoman era property deeds, stating that ' this is against state interests'. When will you have the courage to open up these documents?

These bans, denials and falsifications shaped the (mis)understanding of the 1915 history by the Turkish people until recently. But the number of people who face historic facts is increasing rapidly in Turkey, especially and unfortunately after Hrant Dink's death. Even more significantly, these people are now starting to pressure the Turkish state to face the historic truths as well. Turks who don't know the historic facts, become sick when they go abroad and face accusations of being liars. Turks who do know the facts but deny them, also become sick when they go abroad, as they are acutely aware that foreigners know the facts and moreover, they know that the Turks are lying. Turks then become isolated, defensive and burdened with this dreadful weight placed on their shoulders. This is an undeserved injustice to the present generations of Turkey. It is your responsibility to lift this weight and eliminate the sickness from your people, instead of being preoccupied with the number of ultra-nationalist votes that you may lose potentially.

I know you are allergic to the use of the word 'genocide'. But it is still possible to face the historic facts of 1915 and to start dealing with justice and restitution for the Armenian people without using any terms and definitions. What are you waiting for to implement positive measures, without any further buildup of external and internal pressures? I had listed several justice and restitution measures in my previous articles, as well as presented them to the 'wise men' that Mr. Davutoglu had sent recently to open up communication channels with the Diaspora. But it seems that all positive proposals and suggestions on this issue 'goes in one ear, and comes out the other', as Mr. Erdogan recently stated.