

THE TURK AND HIS CONSCIENCE

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✘ **Vosgan Mekhitarian**, Los Angeles, 21 September 2015

Translated by **Avery** from the original Armenian text

"The Turkish government and people are responsible for the difficulties encountered by the refugees, many of whom have lost their lives and their families."

(Professor Ayhan Kaya – Istanbul Bilgi University)



In view of these plaintive and tragic pictures of two lifeless bodies—one drowned, the other starved to death – how can one not mourn the injustice of humanity? As a result of the tragic event that took place on September 2, 2015, the lifeless body of the drowned child Aylan Kurdi had washed ashore on the Akyarlar beach of Turkey's south-eastern Mediterranean city of Bodrum. Turkish media attempted to awaken humanity's conscience, particularly those of the European states, by these heart-wrenching pictures. Can one imagine such a contradictory/absurd phenomenon? A barbarian state, which remorselessly slaughtered a million-and-a-half helpless Armenians, uprooting them from their ancestral homeland of thousands of years, attempting to awaken humanity's conscience.

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The photographer of the first picture is Editor Nilüfer Demir of Doğan News Agency, who said during a recent interview: *"I felt deep pain while taking the photo and wanted the world to feel the same pain"*. Nilüfer Demir should be asked what kind of pain would she have felt had she taken the second picture, of a Christian Armenian child who had starved to death (during the Armenian Genocide), and

what would she have wanted to do to awaken the conscience of humanity ?

Another member of the Turkish media, Belkin Akatlan of Daily News, narrates the sorrow of the soldiers when they reached the seashore and saw the child's lifeless body, and one of the soldiers who said that the sad scene reminded him of his own child. Comedy or tragedy? Where was that Turk soldier's conscience when his compatriot tore open the womb of an Armenian mother with a *Yatağan (Turkish sword)*, removed the unborn infant, and threw him like a ball in front of starving dogs?

But the masterpiece of the comedy was President Erdogan's declaration, according to presidential palace spokesman, about his conversation with the drowned child's father, Abdullah Kurdi: *"If only you had not put to sea so that we could host you in our country. Those two babies were our children as much as they were your children. And your esteemed wife was our sister."* Is it possible he would have the same feelings seeing the second picture and declaring: *"I wish you had stayed on your ancestral lands and had developed and enriched those lands as your ancestors had for thousands of years."*? Oh, the injustice and the sarcasm.....

On the other hand, how humane is the approach of Professor Ayhan Kaya, who in view of the flow of tens of thousands of refugees through Turkey towards Europe, declares: *"In general, the public associates with and describes the word "refugee" as influx, occupation, invasion, flood and flow, which have all similar resonance with natural disasters. By doing that we forget the fact they are human beings escaping tragedies, or trying to find safer future for themselves and for their families."* Behold, the other Turk.....

Unfortunately, this is the people's approach towards refugees - be they politicians, media representatives, academicians, or specialists, who add their input towards dehumanizing the human being who is a refugee, because they view the latter as a danger to their countries' socioeconomic and public safety.

Throughout history we have seen the Turkish state's hostile policy, particularly towards those who are of different religion, or culture, or ethnicity. And this phenomenon does not apply only to refugees who have found shelter in Turkey, but also to other minorities (Armenian, Greek, Assyrian, Alevi, Kurd, Zaza, Circassian.). Turkish state's policy has always been hostile, and less tolerant towards all those who are different from Turkish ethnic, religious and cultural identity.

What conscience and what justice are Turks and particularly the Turkish government talking about? One is obliged to awake one's conscience before asking others to awaken theirs, if one wishes to transform this fleeting life to a heavenly journey towards eternity.

