TURKEY, THE FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE OF SYRIAN ARMENIANS

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Category: Opinions

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Re: Syria's Armenian Minority Flees from Conflict, The Star.com, 27 February 2013

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Turkey helping Syrian Armenians

This article does injustice to the burden borne by Turkey regarding the Syrians seeking refuge in the neighbouring countries. Turkey, contrary to its portrayal as a country that Syrian Armenians are hiding in and as a country they once feared most, has provided and will continue to provide a safe haven for those in need without any discrimination as to their religion or nationality or any other aspect whatsoever.

Turkey also has a non-rejection policy for the refugees at the border. That applies to the Syrian Armenian community as well. Turkey is helping them by letting its airspace open to transfer them to Armenia. Turkey is ready to help them in Turkey and/or in Syria through relevant agencies if there is a request on their part.
Currently, the number of Syrians in the 17 camps built in Turkey is above 185,000, while another 100,000 are living with their own means or with relatives in Turkey. The national spending in this regard is approaching $600 million.

It is also worth mentioning that before the crisis erupted in Syria, Syrian Armenians regularly visited Turkey and also many of them used Turkish Airlines for their travels around the world, including to Canada. Turkey also rejects the characterization of the events of 1915 as "genocide." Our position on

the issue is well known; accusing a nation with "genocide" is a serious allegation that needs to be substantiated with historical and legal evidence.

Dr. Tuncay Babali, Ambassador to Canada, the Republic of Turkey

Facts on Armenian Genocide

I, as an ordinary Armenian, not an ambassador, am obliged to respond to my colleague from Turkey, who, surprisingly, hasn't come across any "substantiated historical and legal evidence" on Armenian Genocide during his distinguished career. I do not wish to go into the details of the Genocide, which has been overwhelmingly documented, but honestly believing to my colleague's lack of knowledge I'll just point out few directions where Dr. Tuncay Babali may replenish his academic reservoirs with certain facts.

In 2002 the New York-based independent International Center for Transitional Justice concluded that the Ottoman massacre of Armenians "includes all of the elements of the crime of genocide as defined in the Genocide Convention." Moreover, in addition to Canada, where my Turkish colleague is accredited as an ambassador, there are more than two dozen states and several international organizations — amongst them the most renowned International Association of Genocide Scholars — who have recognized and condemned the Armenian Genocide.

Another fact-finding mission is to simply travel through western Armenia, which was conquered in 11th century by Turkish nomads from Altay Mountains, and suddenly stumble upon thousands of Armenian monuments, churches, fortresses, entire cities that Turkish government didn't even bother to rename. Ask yourself — where is the indigenous population of these cities, where are the Christian parishioners of the empty churches, how could 1,5 million people simply disappear from the face of this earth.

I think you will find a little bit of historic evidence that still lies in the land of Noah, the Cradle of Civilization that Young Turks' government so brutally raped and desecrated. Have dignity and courage to recognize, like bright Turkish novelist, Nobel Prize winner, Orhan Pamuk. Have respect towards 10 million Armenians that still mourn their terrific losses. Have courage!

Armen Yeganian, Armenia's Ambassador to Canada