TURKEY'S HIRED SCHOLARS DENY GENOCIDE

Posted on July 15, 2011 by Keghart



Category: Opinions

Prof. Akcam Reveals Turkish Plan to Pay Scholars to Deny the Armenian Genocide

Harut Sassounian, Publisher, The California Courier, 14 July 2011

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Dr. Akcam, holder of the Kaloosdian/Mugar Chair in Armenian Genocide Studies at Clark University in Worcester, Mass., stated that "the Turkish government is following a very systematic and aggressive policy in the US," by attempting to cast doubt on the veracity of the Armenian Genocide. Ankara's grand scheme is to make Turkish denialist claims as widely acceptable as the belief that the events of 1915 constituted genocide. Moreover, through a series of lawsuits in US courts, Turkey and its proxies are trying to present any criticism of denialist scholars and exclusion of revisionist materials from university programs as suppression of "academic freedom."

Prof. Akcam, one of the first Turkish scholars to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide, related to his audience that during his visit to Istanbul last December, he had a private conversation with a person who had "inside information" regarding the Turkish Foreign Ministry's activities in the United States on subject of the Armenian Genocide. Dr. Akcam's confidential source told him that sometime in 2004-2005, an American university professor had met with "authorities connected with the Turkish Foreign Ministry." At that meeting, the professor told his Turkish hosts that "Turkey didn't have a systematic program on the academic level with which to counter the claims of an Armenian Genocide," and that "the genocide claim is well established at this point," telling them that "there's very little" they can do "by trying to confront it head on."

Dr. Akcam was privately informed that the American professor made the following recommendation to Turkish officials: "The thing you need to do is to dig a ditch in front of all the genocide claims; you need to create doubt by writing scholarly works which will awaken that doubt." Dr. Akcam interpreted these words to mean that "by producing and encouraging new academic works," American scholars could "normalize the idea that 1915 was not genocide, just as the belief that it was genocide has become accepted."

While it is commonly assumed that the Turkish government provides financial incentives to scholars worldwide to publish articles and books denying the Armenian Genocide, this is the first time that a

knowledgeable Turkish insider has confirmed these assumptions. The confidential source told Dr. Akcam that the Turkish Foreign Ministry accepted the American scholar's proposal and "transferred large sums of money to the US." The informant revealed to Dr. Akcam the names of American academics who received funds to write books denying the Armenian Genocide, and disclosed that "there are documents signed by their own hand and that these receipts are now in the files of the Foreign Ministry's records."

In his lecture, Dr. Akcam stated that he did not want "to put any academic under a cloud of suspicion." However, when he connected the information received from his Istanbul source to some recent publications, "a disturbing picture emerges as far as Armenian Genocide research is concerned."

Dr. Akcam then referred to Michael Gunter's recent book, "Armenian History and the Question of Genocide," as a possible "example of this approach." The website of the book's publisher, Palgrave Macmillan, stated: "Although as many as 600,000 of them died during World War I, it was neither a premeditated policy perpetrated by the Ottoman Turkish government nor an event unilaterally implemented without cause. Of course, in no way does this excuse the horrible excesses that were committed."

Prof. Akcam further observed that the four academics -- Hakan Yavuz of University of Utah, Guenter Lewy of University of Massachusetts, Jeremy Salt of Bilkent University, Ankara, and Edward J. Ericson of Marine Corps Command & Staff College, Virginia -- who praised Gunter's book, "are well known for their denialist position and works regarding the genocide of 1915." Although Prof. Akcam did not wish to make "an accusation against the book's writer," he stated: "the strange similarities between what I was told in confidence in Istanbul and what appears on the jacket cover of that book gave me pause, that's all."

While no one should accuse academics of receiving funds from the Turkish government or its proxies without solid evidence, it would be enlightening if any of them would voluntarily come forward and disclose whether they have been funded by Turkish sources!