UNRESOLVED TRAUMA REASON FOR VIOLENCE, SUFFERING

Posted on October 25, 2014 by Keghart



Category: Opinions

By Ozgun Caglar, Agos, October 2015

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Namık Kemal Dincer, Erdal Doğan & Osman Kavala. Photo: KADİR KAÇAN

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There were many people in Turkey who had committed crimes against humanity--not only the state but also several groups, Dogan added. "When we talk about genocide and crime against humanity the number of killed is not very important. It's not even necessary to kill people. Forced transportation of people from their homes is also genocide. People in Turkey always talk about reciprocal killings between Armenians and Turks. The reciprocal killings allegation is not based on facts. However, this behavior has been changing in the last few years," the Turkish lawyer pointed out.

According to the Genocide Resolution of 1948 not only the organizers but even third-party participants to genocide are considered responsible, said Dogan and added: "But in Turkey people often try to waive this responsibility and excuse themselves that they were not the organizers but that they were deceived by the organizers to assist them."

He stressed that the current Turkish regime is built on the same genocidal mentality of 1915. "Thus

lawyers still face challenges because the regime is covering up the Genocide fact. For example, we have difficulty getting our hands on documents, especially documents that are not written in Turkish. Their translation into Turkish is forbidden by the National Security Council. Lawyers in Turkey are not allowed to work freely and to collect documents," said Dogan.

What can civil society do?

Sociologist Osman Kavala said that Turkish civil society has to campaign for the recognition of the Genocide because there is no big Armenian community in Turkey any more. "There is no genocide anymore. There is reconciliation with the Kurds nowadays. So some people may think why they should not be concerned in this issue. But this issue is not local anymore. It's an international issue because the Genocide created the Armenian Diaspora and this diaspora is working for the recognition of the Genocide by the parliaments in the countries where Armenians live," said Kavala.

He added: "We are trying to explain to people that this is an internal issue to be solved in Turkey. We are trying to explain that we are not working on this issue to compensate the injustice committed against the Armenian people but to make Turkey a more civilized and democratic state."

Diaspora Armenians must communicate with their fatherland

A dialogue between Armenians and the Turkish community is important to understand each other, said Kavala. "During our conversations with Diaspora Armenians we realized that for them to establish connections with their fatherland is more important that the recognition of Genocide because to maintain their identity they need to connect with their fatherland," he observed and added: "For years after the Genocide they considered Turks a bad people just as we considered them to be bad people. But because of Hrant Dink something began to change because he worked on reconciliation. After his assassination a sensitivity on this issue developed in Turkey."

Kurds want to explain what happened in 1915

Project coordinator Namik Kemal Dincer said that after Dink's revelations the Kurds--not only the intellectuals--wanted to talk about the Genocide and to explain what had happened. "That's why we organized this oral history symposium. Kurds want to tell what happened and to relieve their conscience off this heavy responsibility. Diyarbakir has shown courage in discussing this issue. That's why we chose this city as a center of our work," said Dincer.

"We have found living memory in Diyarbakir. We heard very violent stories about the Genocide. They told us all the places where Armenians had been massacred. The most famous is Duden. Kurdish mothers banned their children from going there. They told them that there were ghosts that scare their children. They use several different words and phrases for the Genocide—'Kırkırın', 'Fermana Fılle', and 'Demma Bırını"'.

Dincer also said his group concluded that Kurds were not happy with what had happened to the Armenians. "They don't think that it is good that the Armenians left their fatherland or died so their

land was left to Kurds so Kurds can now set up their own Kurdistan," said Dincer. Kurds also told the researchers that Armenians had told them "we are dinner but you will be the next meal."

Headhunters called Bejik

During an interview in Lice/Diyarbakir a local had told Dincer's group that in 1950 a person nicknamed "Hemolo" had told him and others how many Armenians he had killed in 1915. The killer had said that while Armenians were being killed by the state there was a group of headhunters called "Bejik" which went around killing women and the children.

"The fact that now Kurds are self-criticizing is a positive behavior," said Dincer.

'Godfather' relation between Kurds and Armenians

The event coordinator said that before 1915 there were good relations between Kurds and Armenians. There was a 'godfather' relation between them. Before 1915 Armenians were considered very brave people by the Kurds, said Dincer.

He concluded his talk by telling the audience that Turks and Kurds believed that participants in the killings of Armenians and took their goods and lands would be unhappy all their lives. So when something bad happened to them they would say that it was because they were damned.

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