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RA Diaspora Ministry to establish Pan-Armenian Youth Parliament

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The RA Ministry of Diaspora plans to establish a Pan-Armenian Youth Parliament. The first steps are already taken – the draft charter is released.

“Like the charter of any other organization, the charter of the Pan-Armenian Youth Parliament specifies its purposes, rights and liabilities. For finalization, the draft is presently submitted to the Armenian youth organizations for comments and suggestions. At the same time we are creating a database of Armenian youth organizations, adding information also about new organizations to be included in the Parliament,” notified Atom Mkhitarian, Head of the Department of Pan-Armenian Programs at the RA Ministry of Diaspora. He also specified that according to the draft charter, the Pan-Armenian Youth Parliament can involve only representatives of youth organizations, but not individuals. Besides, each organization, be it pan-Armenian or representing a small community, can have only one vote in the Parliament. There shall be no restriction to membership.

In order to participate in the establishment and activity of the Pan-Armenian Youth Parliament, it is necessary to be a member of an authorized non-governmental organization. By the way, the number of organizations to be involved in the Parliament is not limited, either. There are already suggestions on what subjects the Parliament should discuss. The first discussion is on the issue of drafting the charter of the Pan-Armenian Youth Parliament. Next, there will be discussed the issue of organizing a two-week summer school for young leaders of Armenia. Besides the above-mentioned questions, the organizers also expect each organization to suggest problematic pan-Armenian issues, discuss them and adopt proper decisions.

“We have no financial resources for this year to indeed assemble a parliament, but if existence of the parliament proves necessary and effective, next year we are going to hold a real session. Those actively involved in Parliament doings will be invited to participate in pan-Armenian youth programs and assemblies of the RA Diaspora Ministry. Before then the Parliament will be operating virtually and on-line forums will be held,” informed Mkhitaryan and underlined that the discussed projects were going to be presented to the RA state structures.



Armenian Genocide: Turks are tired of keeping their mouth shut

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The number of Turkish journalists and writers who refer to the Armenian Genocide is growing, while their books are purchased rapidly.

Serenade novel by Turkish writer Zulfu Livaneli, which refers to the Armenian Genocide, has become a bestseller in Turkey. 50,000 samples of the book were sold within three days. The novel tells about the Armenian Genocide, Holocaust and Kurds.

The Turkish people, at least a part of it, is tired of keeping its mouth shut or started conceiving that the country's fathers presented the events at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries not wholly true.

Some people forfeited their lives for revelations, like editor-in-chief of Agos paper Hrant Dink, who was killed on January 19, 2007, near his office.

But he has many followers: in December 2008 over 200 representatives of Turkey's intelligentsia initiated 'Forgive us, Armenians' campaign, placing a relevant petition on the web. And the campaign has sent away the fear imposed for decades with respect to the Armenian Genocide. Around 30,000 people have signed the petition.

And it is a normal result: the nation, which was forced to keep silence for many years, will finally be tired of doing it.

Diaspora Correspondents



Lawsuit against U.S. Federal Reserve seeks Armenian gold looted by Turkey

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CAR filed the lawsuit under the Freedom of Information Act. The gold, originally valued at five million Turkish Gold Liras (\$22 million dollars), is now estimated to be worth hundreds of millions of dollars. The Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York recently claimed that they have no records of any Armenian gold in their possession.

It was not easy to trace the circumstances under which the Armenian-owned gold was transferred from Istanbul to the United States almost a century ago. The results of our research on the convoluted series of transactions are summarized below:

The Ottoman government had seized the gold and other valuables belonging to Armenians deported and killed in the 1915 genocide, expropriating their bank accounts and safe deposit boxes. The Ottoman Liquidation Commission used a complex set of bank transfers to hide the trail of this "blood money." The Turkish Treasury placed the looted Armenian gold initially in the German Deutschebank in Istanbul. In 1916, the gold was transferred to the Bleichroeder Bank in Vienna, and from there moved to the Reichsbank (German Central Bank) in Berlin, and deposited in the account of Ottoman Public Debt.

At the end of World War I, when the Allied Powers demanded reparations from Germany and its Ottoman Turkish ally, German officials had no choice but to comply with that request, agreeing to turn over to the Allies the Armenian gold held by the Reichsbank. Accordingly, the expropriated Armenian gold was transferred to France and Great Britain in 1921.

A subsequent British document confirms the true ownership of this gold. On September 26 1924, leaders of the two main opposition parties in Great Britain, Liberal Party leader and former Prime Minister H.H. Asquith and Conservative Party leader and future Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin sent a memorandum to Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald pleading for British assistance to Armenians in view of their support for the Allied cause and the great suffering they endured during World War I. The two British leaders argued that “the sum of 5 million pounds (Turkish gold) deposited by the Turkish Government in Berlin in 1916, and taken over by the Allies after the Armistice, was in large part (perhaps wholly) Armenian money. After the enforced deportation of the Armenians in 1915, their bank accounts, both current and deposit, were transferred by order to the State Treasury at Constantinople. This fact enabled the Turks to send five million sterling to the Reichsbank, Berlin, in exchange for a new issue of notes.”

Subsequently, instead of returning the Armenian gold to its original owners, Britain and France sold it to the United States Government through J.P. Morgan Bank in Paris, by exchanging it for U.S. Treasury Certificates.

On January 29, 1925, Senator William H. King submitted resolution 319 to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee demanding that the looted gold be “set aside in trust” for Armenians. The resolution stated: “The Turkish Government had arbitrarily seized and transferred to the Turkish treasury all bank accounts, both current and deposit, belonging to Armenians, by which Armenian gold in the sum of 5 million Turkish pounds, amounting to \$22,450,000, was transferred to the Turkish treasury, which gold was afterwards deposited by the Turkish Government in the Reichsbank at Berlin.... Said deposit of Armenian gold in the Reichsbank at Berlin was by article 259 of the Treaty of Versailles transferred and surrendered to the principal allied and associated powers,

including the United States.... Said deposit in equity and right belongs to the Armenians from whom the same was seized, or to their legal representatives.... Said deposit should be set aside in trust to be hereafter paid over to the persons from whom said gold was seized, or to their lawful representatives....”

This gold is just a small portion of the billions of dollars of Armenian assets stolen by Turkey and various other countries during and after the Armenian Genocide. The restitution of all looted Armenian assets, wherever they may be, should be one of the highest priorities for those pursuing justice for the horrendous crimes committed against the Armenian nation.

By Harut Sassounian
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