

April 22, 2015

Statement of Human Rights Groups in the Middle East and North Africa on the Occasion of the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide

Joint Press Release

This year, on the occasion of the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, we join in extending our condolences to the global Armenian community for the mass extermination campaign against them in 1915, which is commemorated annually on April 24th. We call on President Erdogan and Prime Minister Davutoglu to recognize the genocide and the responsibility of Turkey's predecessor government for the terrible crimes against the Armenian community. As human rights organizations in the Middle East and North Africa region, we reiterate our call for truth, justice, and accountability for the victims of this Genocide.

The facts of the Armenian Genocide are well known. Encouraged by the cloak of war and alarmed by the crumbling of the Ottoman Empire, the Young Turk leadership saw the Armenian population as a threat to the Empire's future survival, and decided to exterminate their Armenian subjects. Beginning in the spring of 1915, in one of the first genocides of the twentieth century, the Young Turk regime and its state officials presided over the mass deportation and annihilation of up to a million and a half Armenians from different parts of the Empire. Despite wide-scale global recognition of these facts, successive Turkish governments have refused to acknowledge the events of 1915 as genocide or to make any reparations or amends to the survivors. Discussion of the Armenian Genocide remains controversial inside Turkey, and the vast majority of Turks are ignorant about the history and facts of the genocide.

The government of Turkey today presents itself as a model for nations around the world, often championing human rights throughout the region and in the Muslim world. By recognizing the massive crimes and human rights abuses that took place within its own nation, even if a century ago, Turkey could initiate a unique path in a region whose political conflicts have degenerated into bloody ethnic and sectarian conflicts. As activists and representatives of human rights organizations in the Middle East and North Africa, we call upon the Turkish government to now, one hundred years later, acknowledge the scale and magnitude of the atrocities committed against the Armenian people. Without truth, recognition and accountability for past crimes, it is difficult to change course and set a new path for respect, tolerance and protection for minorities in the world today, and especially in the Middle East and North Africa.

Signatories

- **Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights**
- **Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies**
- **Arabic Network for Human Rights Information**
- **El Nadim Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence**
- **Tamkeen for Legal Aid**
- **World Amazigh Assembly**
- **Aleppo Compatriotic Charitable Organization**
- **National Federation of Amazigh Associations in Morocco**
- **Lawyers Without Borders**