

You are the one of few scientists from Turkey that does not hesitate in speaking about the Genocide. Which was the basis of the use of that expression?.

Let us make one very important point clear at the beginning: I do NOT use the expression “genocide”. I use “mass killings”, “ethnic cleansing”, etc.

I do it not only because the element “intent”, the core concept of the 1948 UN Genocide Convention, is not proven as yet, but precisely because this expression makes it thoroughly impossible in Turkey to study the bloody events of 1915.

Imagine that someone suddenly wakes you up at 04.00 o'clock in the morning and that he yells at you: “Your grandfather was a Nazi”. Besides, he tells you: “After making apologies, you will also pay indemnities and also give a part of your apartment house to the children of deceased for the wrongdoings of your grandfather”.

People of Turkey, especially the great majority who live in central and western Turkey have not heard anything about 1915 that happened in the Ottoman Empire. Not a thing. Official ideology hid everything during some 90 years.

When met with such an expression which only means “hated Nazis” in the eyes of the people here, the Turks categorically refuse to hear anything that we, the reformers in Turkey, want to inform them about. This stance of the “non-silent” sections of the Armenian diaspora is definitely counter-productive. I understand that the negationist position of the Turkish State causes this to a very great extent, but this section of the Diaspora tends to use this expression in a fetishist way which is definitely revengist.

“Just tell us: Do you accept it is genocide or not?!”. Our beloved friend Hrant Dink had answered this stance in a very subtle and rational way. He said to the Diaspora: “Which one is more important to you: That the Turks pronounce the G-word, or that Turkey becomes a democratic country where everything can be discussed?”.

I think I'll speak no more after what Hrant had said.

Which political consequences could have the recognition of the Genocide? Is Turkey afraid of the derivations as regards territorial integrity?

First of all, the Diaspora must sit down and discuss and decide between themselves about what the Armenians want.

For example, the Republic of Armenia wants to establish normal relations with the Republic of Turkey without any preconditions whatsoever.

Some of the Diaspora want apologies. Some want apologies+indemnities. Some want apologies+indemnities+land.

This stance of the Diaspora, let me put it once more and for all, makes our job as human and minority rights defenders here in Turkey very difficult, and by the same token, it gives an unbelievable amount of ammunition to Turkish nationalists to fire at us.

What are the changes in the society since Hrant Dink's death? At that moment, people shouted: "Everyone is Armenian!", do you think that this fact can mark a tendency in their believes?

"We Are All Hrants" and "We Are All Armenians" shouted 100.000 people in Istanbul that day. This means that people are beginning to learn. Of course, there was an immediate mass reaction to this from the eastern provinces especially as: "We Are All Turks" and "We Are All Ogun Samasts" (Ogun Samast is the suspected killer).

Do you know something about Orhan Pamuk's decision to leave Turkey?

One of the very large circulation newspapers here (Sabah) published the other day that he is coming back in April. He's currently teaching at Columbia University, NY.

Which is the position of the government?

Quite positive in the way of human rights. But the Government is now bewildered by the immensely roaring tsunami of nationalism because it's the election year (double election year: the president of the Republic will be chosen in May, and the general elections will be held in November).

This wave, by the way, is mainly a reaction to globalization conceived as "EU intervention", meaning the EU Harmonization Packages enacted between 2001 and 2004. This was a modernizing "revolution from above". Revolutions from above change the laws, but not the minds of people, which takes a very long process. Turkey has accomplished in 70 years what it took the western Europe to do in 400 years. Of course, this creates reactions. We'll endure all that.

Have you ever been threatened due to your public speaking about Genocide?

Yes, ever since I published the "Minority and Cultural Rights Report" in October 2004, and I still am receiving threats of death. Now that Hrant is killed, I have an official bodyguard assigned by the Interior Ministry.

Have you ever thought to leave Turkey?

Of course not. I was born here, raised here, studied here. This is my duty as a human rights activist of Turkey. I owe that much to my country.