

**ESAM**

[Economic and Social Researches Center]

**Imperialism and the Armenian Issue  
International Symposium**

-OPENING SPEECH-

**M. Recai KUTAN**

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# IMPERIALISM AND THE ARMENIAN ISSUE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

## Opening Speech

M. Recai KUTAN

Esteemed Protocol,

Distinguished Guests,

I would like to greet and thank each of you on my behalf and on behalf of ESAM, Economic and Social Researches Centre, for your participation to our organization.

We pray to Allah Almighty (cc) that this meeting brings benevolence to the humanity.

Distinguished Guests,

On 24th April every year, Armenian diaspora, imperialist countries in Europe and in America reiterate pseudo "Armenian Genocide" and refer to unhuman and unethical means to prove some false, groundless and baseless claims. As a result of these activities, national parliaments in numerous European and American countries have declared "24 April" as the memorial of the genocide. Furthermore, France and Southern Cyprus Greek Parliaments decided to punish those are against their pseudo Armenian Genocide. Recently, European Parliament has taken some decisions including also the claims for genocide. Out of 28 European countries, only 11 of them recognize 1915 incidents as "genocide".

In an environment of fearless political attacks against Turkey in Centenary of "Armenian Relocation" of 24 April 1915, ESAM, first civil strategic research institution of Turkey, has decided to its first international symposium in 2015 with the title "Imperialism and Armenian Issue" to fulfil its mission of informing the public.

Objective of the Symposium is to analyse and announce all aspects of the tragedies occurred under prevailing conditions of First World War within the merits of science, justice and rights and free from prejudices. Calling relocation as Armenian Genocide or Holocaust does not accord to historic facts. Increasing hatred and enmity among the societies by tampering with the incidents of the past may cause hostilities and disputes between the countries. Therefore, this Symposium will

focus on how to construct a peaceful future in solidarity in these geographies learning from the past in the light of the facts.

## **CIRCUMSTANCES OF RELOCATION**

Distinguished Guests,

One of the most important tributes of Ottoman Empire is, doubtless to say, its ability to rule its subjects each having a different religion, language, ethical and cultural background in a peaceful and solidarity environment for more than six centuries. Unlike contemporary European rulers of the time, Ottoman emperors bestowed extensive freedom of belief and culture to its Muslim and non-Muslim subjects.

Ottoman Empire created throughout the centuries a peaceful coexistence environment for in Eastern Europe, Balkans, Middle East and Northern Africa for the communities belonging to different races and religions. That became possible the motto "unity in difference" of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, Armenian Community that remained under Turkish rule for 8 centuries including Seljuki period developed good neighbourhood relations with the Muslims and called as Millet-i Sadıka meaning "Loyal People". Armenians enjoyed, practised and preserved their religion, language and culture during the rule of Ottoman Empire. While those living in Ottoman Empire enjoyed their all religious and cultural rights and freedom; in return, Armenian offspring living America and Europa started to lose their identities and cultures during the same period. As a matter of fact, they were literally assimilated in respective nations.

Start of recession and weakening period of Ottoman Empire starting from first quarter of the 19th Century created feasible environment for devastating and manipulative policies of especially Britain, France, Russia and Germany against Ottoman Empire in line with their interests in the region. Plans of Western Imperialist powers for dividing Ottoman Empire resulted with the emergence of the circumstances that are also defined as Armenian issue today.

Consequently, Berlin Agreement concluded after 1877- 1878 Ottoman- Russian War was a junction for Turkish and Armenian communities and also a turning point for a series of disputes.

Imperialist powers started to provoke and manipulate Armenians who established good neighbourhood relations with Turks in Anatolia with the promise of establishing their independent state. Thus, mobilizing European Armenian, they first founded Hunchakian Party in Geneva Switzerland in 1887 and then they found Dashnaktsutyun Revolutionary Federation in Tbilisi in 1891.

Thus, Armenians perpetrated more than 50 small-to- big revolts and riots from 1890s till year 1915. They shed blood of thousands of civilian Muslims in various Anatolian cities and created difficult situations for the Ottoman State. Armenian gangs were restless enough to plot an assassin against Ottoman Emperor Sultan Abdulhamid II in year 1905.

Year 1915 was the hardest year for Ottoman State during the First World War. The army was fighting in Gallipoli (Dardanelles) against British- France armies equipped with most sophisticated warfare technologies of the time as well as fighting for life or death against Russians in the East. Starting from the onset of the First World War where Ottoman Empire combatted in at least 4-5 fronts, Armenian Gangs served as the scouts of Russians in Eastern Anatolia.

Revolting against Ottoman Empire with the illusion of establishing a Great Armenia in Ottoman lands, Armenian gangs caused emergence of a civil war in Anatolia together with collaborator Britain, France and especially Russia. In addition to losing its eastern cities Erzurum, Van, Bitlis, Mus, Trabzon as a result of Russian- Armenian collaboration, Ottoman State was also busy with taking measures to terminate the civil war incited by the Armenians.

Within framework of these measures, the Government of the time enacted the Law, that is referred as Transfer and Settling in Ottoman documents and publicly known famous Relocation and it included removing Armenian people from region of war and relocating them Iraq and Syria which were other Ottoman lands of the time remaining outside of ongoing war.

A reasonable person will definitely ask these questions: “Was the decision of Relocation taken under a mere racist basis abruptly and for no reason? In 20th April 1915, Armenian gangs ravaged city Van collaborating with Russians killing thousands of innocent civilians. Had this massacre no contribution to the law of relocation?”

Nevertheless, it is a great shame that European Union and the Pope have recently make statements on baseless Armenian Genocide allegations. Such a bad attitude of EU and Pope that emphasize international peace and security in every possible occasion will not serve for nothing but to increase tensions in both Turkish- Islamic world and in international politics.

Pope Francis, Catholic Bishop of Rome, organized a service in Vatican in honour of baseless Armenian Genocide. President of Armenia and Armenian Patriarch also attended to the service. In his speech, the Pope said “The first, which is widely considered 'the first genocide of the 20th century', struck Armenian people”. In response to the Pope who speaks against his spiritual religious identity, we declare that your words are slander and defamation. If Ottomans were to be

racist and tyrants, Armenians would not have preserved their own religion, language and cultures for centuries. If Armenians were to suffer from a holocaust as exerted against Muslims by Catholics in Andalusia, Armenian community would have been swept from the history.

Muslims have never and ever exerted any genocide against the people of other religion or race in any part of the history. A historical example clearly depicts difference of Islamic civilization and Christian western civilization. In 1565, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire, calls French Ambassador and asks about "St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre". In 24th August 1572, ten thousands of Protestants were slayed by Catholics in 1572 during French Wars of Religion. Starting in Paris, ten thousands of Protestants were killed in only two days. Surviving Protestants were compelled to convert to Catholics.

Sokollu Mehmed Pasha scorns the Ambassador saying "Numerous subjects of different religion exist in vast realms of the world where our flag is raised. They live as they believe. We have churches and synagogues next to mosques in Istanbul. No one can disturb the other."

Distinguished Guests,

At the end of my opening remarks, I hope that this Symposium contributes to clearing and understanding Armenian Issue as much as possible and further contribute to Turkish- Armenian relations. I would like to greet and welcome once more all scholars, academicians and our guests for their participation to the Symposium.