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The Armenian Genocide Legacy

Edited by

Alexis Demirdjian

Office of the Prosecutor, International Criminal Court, The Netherlands

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Foreword

It was an extraordinary moment – in many parts of the world – a coming together to mark a date, to remember a tragedy, to resist the assassination of memory, to insist that what had happened not be forgotten. One hundred years after the Young Turk government of the Ottoman Empire initiated and carried out massive deportations and killings of their Armenian and Assyrian subjects, the descendants of survivors, along with ordinary citizens of various ethnicities – Turks and Kurds among them – as well as historians and sociologists, anthropologists and legal scholars professionally engaged in the study of what happened and its aftermath, gathered in Erevan, Istanbul, New York, Los Angeles, The Hague, and elsewhere to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of what has almost universally been recognized as the Armenian Genocide.

One of those gatherings took place in the Netherlands, not far from the Peace Palace, from 5 March to 7 March 2015. Convened under the title ‘The Armenian Genocide Legacy, 100 Years On’, the events began with lectures and discussions with students at Humanity House in The Hague and continued more formally with an international conference at the Institute for Global Justice. I had the honor of giving a keynote address at each of the events, laying out the narrative and attempting to explain why the Ottoman government decided to eliminate several of its subject peoples.

Most unique about the assembly of participants, brought together through the hard work of Alexis Demirdjian, was the inclusion of men and women with varied professional expertise. Bringing international lawyers into conversation with art and film critics, literary scholars, social and political historians, and educational theorists resulted in the production of new knowledge and the expansion of the horizons of each of those who listened to the presentations. Historical reconstruction was but a beginning. The eternal questions of legacy and what might be done to further understanding engaged the audience. No easy answers were sought or provided. The limits of legal intervention and international courts were frankly admitted. But rather than despair or disillusionment over the denial of past tragedies, optimism prevailed. The conference itself was a recognition that the battle over erasure of the Genocide had been won. The denialists had been marginalized and were in retreat even as they continued to snipe at the truth. The centennial marked a moment when Armenians, Turks, Kurds and progressive humanist forces could move forward rather than simply fight old battles on the grounds determined by official refusals to accept state guilt.

While the excitement and energy of the conversations during those March days cannot be fully recovered, the essays in this volume represent

the lasting voices of the presenters. Reading through the chapters one travels from graphic depictions of the events of 1915–16, through the thickets of legal struggles, on to representatives of the Genocide in the media, art, literature and film. Not only the past but the present is portrayed in the stories of memorialization and hiking to the sites of Armenian resistance. Genocide is sadly not over, but with us in various forms today – in the memories of descendants, in ongoing conflicts over land and who should live on it, and in the disastrous attempts by pseudo-scholars and governments to distort the truth and turn our attention away from the dark moments of history. This extraordinary book – and the meetings that bred it – are places where exploration has begun. Such investigations encourage us all not only to remember but to engage in further inquiries and struggle to set the record right.

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The project received crucial support from the USC Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies (IAS) and I wish to personally thank Ms Salpi Ghazarian, Director of the IAS, for giving us generous support and shrewd advice, especially in organizing the March 2015 conference.

The project also received support from the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, particularly from Dr Nanci Adler, Director of Research/Manager Holocaust and Genocide Studies, as well as Martine van den Heuvel.

I wish to thank Dr Ronald Grigor Suny for supporting this project. Dr Suny's keynote speech offered the perfect introduction to our conference held in The Hague in March 2015 and opened up the senses of the audience to the topics and issues we are concerned with. I am indebted for his generosity.

I am equally indebted to Emily Russell and Angharad Bishop at Palgrave Macmillan for their dedicated support and assistance throughout the publishing process of this book. I wish to thank Brian North of CPI Solutions for his assistance, advice and patience in adding the final touches to the book.

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Note to the Reader

References by contributors to other chapters in this volume are inserted in the notes with the chapter number and name of the author.

List of Abbreviations

AKP	Justice and Development Party
ASALA	Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia
BOA	Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (<i>Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri</i>)
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress
EC	European Community
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
GIS	Global Information Systems
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation
RS	Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (<i>Republika Srpska</i>)
SDS	Serbian Democratic Party
SFRY	Social Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
TAF	Turkish Armed Forces
Takvim-I Vekâyi	Official Gazette of the Ottoman Empire