

Call for recognition of 1915 genocide against Armenians, Syriac and Pontiac Greeks

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We thank the European Parliament for its focus on the Genocide of 1915 under Ottoman Empire. Today you will discuss and vote regarding the recognition of the 1915 Genocide against the Armenian people. We ask you kindly to recognize the genocide of 1915 against Armenian as well as genocide of Syriac-Assyrian and Pontiac Greek people.

Syriac (Chaldean, Assyrian, Aramean) people are ancient and native component of Mesopotamian civilization. Due to their Christian and different ethnic identity, they had been victim of genocide along with the Armenian and Pontiac Greek people during the years of 1914-15. Syriac people call these years as “Sayfo” which means “Sword” in Syriac language. Sayfo took place in the eastern regions of Ottoman Empire namely in the regions of Turabdin, Hakkari and Urmia, present day in Iran. During the genocide, nearly 500 thousands of Syriacs had been massacred by Ottoman powers and their local allies namely, Kurdish and other tribes.

Ten of thousands of people, most of them women and children, had been forced to convert to Islam while thousands had been forced to exile their homes and historical places; others had been perished during the deportation due to the malnutrition, thirstiness, hunger and diseases. Intellectuals, writers, composers, public figures, religious leaders and well-known civil personalities had been eliminated as the first phase of the genocide. Hundreds of historical, cultural and social monuments namely churches, monasteries, education centers had been destroyed in order to eradicate all traces of Syriac people from the region. Churches and other religious centers converted to mosques or they had been used for other inappropriate means. Ethnic cleansing took place in all Syriac towns, villages, districts and properties and goods of Syriac people had been seized.

During the genocide under Ottoman Empire rule, Syriac people had been deprived from their societal dynamics, economic resources and they had been at the threshold of total annihilation. The survivors of the genocide, Sayfo, had lived under harsh conditions and they had lived fearful life. The psychological and spiritual trauma of genocide continues to affect generations constantly until today.

Despite numerous reports, facts and findings by witnesses and observers from inside and outside of the Empire, Turkish authorities constantly continue to deny genocide and moreover work against this reality. As the inheritor of the Ottoman Empire, Turkish state continues to deny the genocide of Syriacs, Armenians and Pontiac Greeks. Plus until today, Turkey does not recognize officially identity of Syriac people. On the other side, today, in the 21st century, genocidal mentality, ethnic and religious cleansing continues to target Christian minorities in the Mesopotamia and Middle East. The Sayfo genocide of 1915 against Syriacs today continues at the hands of the barbaric ISIS in the Middle East.

We firmly believe that, the denialist mentality and genocidal politics harm the very fundamental values and understandings of the humanity. As the core and principal responsibility of international democratic laws

and principles is to prevent atrocities, massacres and genocides, we want justice to take place for the perpetrators of this crime against humanity. We believe that, there is no time restriction or limitation for the crimes against humanity and genocides. Moreover modern states do not have to permit this kind of horrific acts.

Retrospectively, distinguished and well-known International Association of Genocide Scholars recognized Armenian, Syriac-Assyrian and Pontiac Greek genocide with a resolution in December 16, 2007. Officially, also Sweden recognized Syriac-Assyrian genocide on March 11, 2010. Few days ago, Dutch Parliament also acknowledged genocide of Syriac-Assyrian people on 09 April, 2015. Finally, on Sunday, 12 April 2015 Pope Francis declared that, “The first genocide of the 20th century targeted Armenians and Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrians and Pontiac Greeks.”

In parallel to this, our demand is to include Syriac-Assyrian people and Pontiac Greek people to the resolution recognizing the genocide of 1915 against Christian entities within the Ottoman territories. Systematic target and annihilative methods and policies targeted Christian entities under the Ottoman-Turkish rule, which also changed the social, cultural, economic and linguistic parameters of these native communities.

We kindly request your support and help in order to stop massacres, killings, property seizure and statelessness of Syriac people in the Middle East. Recognition of 1915 genocide will restore the faith of Syriac people in justice and will bring perpetrators in front of the justice. We believe that recognition of the 1915 genocide will prove that perpetrators of crimes against humanity can face justice anytime and truth will be addressed properly.