

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
THE SITUATION OF CHRISTIAN ARMENIANS IN TURKEY
TESTIMONY OF VAN Z. KRIKORIAN
APRIL 12, 2005

I THANK THE CSCE FOR CONVENING THIS HEARING, EXAMINING FREEDOM OF RELIGION ISSUES IN TURKEY, AND INVITING FATHER KALAYJIAN AND ME TO PARTICIPATE HERE TODAY. THIS IS AN ESPECIALLY MEANINGFUL EVENT, AS APRIL IS THE MONTH IN WHICH THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE IS COMMEMORATED, AND WE REDEDICATE OURSELVES TO BUILDING A FUTURE IN WHICH THAT CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY DOES NOT RECUR.

AS CHRISTIANS AND AMERICANS, WE ALSO WELCOME INCREASED CONCERN FOR RELIGIOUS MINORITIES AS A PART OF UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY. FREEDOM OF RELIGION IS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT, WHICH FOR CHRISTIANS AND MANY OTHERS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD IS ACKNOWLEDGED IN RHETORIC AND IN LAW, BUT DENIED IN PRACTICE. THE ARMENIAN DIASPORA HAS EXPERIENCE WITH LIFE IN COUNTRIES DOMINATED BY EVERY MAJOR RELIGION, IN SECULAR COUNTRIES, AND IN COUNTRIES OPPOSED TO ALL RELIGION.

ONE OF OUR PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS TODAY THEREFORE IS TO TRY TO IMPROVE AND CERTAINLY NOT TO BE THE PRETEXT FOR FURTHER DAMAGE TO THE CONDITIONS OF LIFE FOR ARMENIANS OR ANY OTHER GROUP IN TURKEY. FOR REFERENCE AND FOR DETAILS, ATTACHED TO MY TESTIMONY YOU WILL FIND A REPORT BY DR. TESSA HOFFMAN PUBLISHED BY THE FORUM OF ARMENIAN ASSOCIATIONS IN EUROPE IN OCTOBER 2002, TITLED "ARMENIANS IN TURKEY TODAY, A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION OF THE ARMENIAN MINORITY IN THE TURKISH REPUBLIC." IT IS A DIFFICULT AND DELICATE LINE TO WALK.

THE FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE I HAD WITH THE CSCE'S REMARKABLE WORK AT THE TIME OF THE SOVIET UNION'S COLLAPSE, THE SUMGAI AND BAKU POGROMS, THE ATTEMPTED ERADICATION OF THE ARMENIANS OF NAGORNO-KARABAKH, AND THE TRANSITION TO ARMENIAN INDEPENDENCE WILL ALWAYS BE APPRECIATED AND HOPEFULLY REPLICATED.

THE ARMENIAN PRESENCE IN TURKEY, HOWEVER, IS AND HAS BEEN TENUOUS. INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS TO REFORM HAVE REGULARLY BEEN FOLLOWED BY BACKLASH LEAVING AN EVEN MORE DAMAGED SITUATION THAN BEFORE.

IN AN EFFORT TO BREAK THAT CYCLE, ARMENIANS AND TURKS ARE INCREASINGLY ENGAGING IN CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUES. THERE IS A CRITICAL ROLE FOR RELIGIOUS FIGURES AND RESPECT FOR RELIGIOUS RIGHTS IN THIS PROCESS. IF THE CSCE CAN HELP CATALYZE AND SECURE PROGRESS IN THESE AREAS, YOU WOULD HELP ACHIEVE THE KIND OF PERMANENT RESULTS YOU HAVE HELPED TO ACHIEVED IN OTHER AREAS.

THE DIALOGUE PROCESS IN WHICH I TOOK PART, THE TURKISH ARMENIAN RECONCILIATION COMMISSION (www.tarc.info) BEGAN IN 2001 AND ENDED LAST YEAR, AFTER PRODUCING A LEGAL OPINION ON THE APPLICABILITY OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENOCIDE CONVENTION AND JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CONCERNED GOVERNMENTS (ATTACHED). THIS PROCESS IS THE SUBJECT OF A RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOK "UNSILENCING THE PAST" BY DAVID PHILLIPS WHO SERVED AS THE COMMISSION'S CHAIRMAN. ONE OF OUR JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS STATED:

Religious Understanding Should Be Encouraged. Among civil society initiatives, there are also opportunities for religious leaders to develop contacts and engage in joint activities as well as activities within their own groups to promote reconciliation between Turks and Armenians. Those activities should be encouraged by governments including the restoration of religious sites, and supporting the rights and functioning of religious foundations.

IT IS FAIR TO SAY THAT PROGRESS IN TURKEY IS BEING DRIVEN BY BOTH EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL DEMOCRATIZING FORCES. CERTAINLY THE EUROPEAN UNION HARMONIZATION PACKAGES PASSED INTO TURKISH LAW ARE A TESTAMENT TO THAT COMBINATION. BUT, IT SEEMS THAT A GROWING NUMBER OF PUBLIC FIGURES UNDERSTAND THAT ENTERING THE EUROPEAN UNION IS NOT A TYPE OF STANDARDIZED TEST IN WHICH THE SIMPLE ENACTMENT OF LAWS WILL RESULT IN A PASSING GRADE. THEY UNDERSTAND THAT FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE SHOULD TAKE PLACE IN TURKEY AND THAT CHARGES OF RELIGIOUS PREJUDICE BY THE EUROPEAN UNION RING HOLLOW UNLESS ALL CHRISTIAN, JEWISH, AND NON-MAJORITY RELIGIOUS RIGHTS ARE RESTORED AND RESPECTED IN TURKEY.

WITH THAT BACKGROUND AND SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE CSCE ACTIVITY, LET ME NOW BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE SPECIFIC SITUATION OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCHES IN TURKEY. THERE IS AN ARMENIAN PROTESTANT COMMUNITY IN TURKEY WHICH IS ACTIVE AND THERE IS ALSO AN ACTIVE ARMENIAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY. THE MAJORITY OF ARMENIANS IN TURKEY, AS ELSEWHERE, HOWEVER, ARE MEMBERS OF THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC, ORTHODOX CHURCH, LED BY PATRIARCH MESROB II MUTAFYAN.

THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE IN ISTANBUL IS ONE OF FOUR HIERARCHICAL CENTERS OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH. THERE IS ALSO A

PATRIARCHATE IN JERUSALEM LED BY PATRIARCH TORKOM MANOOGIAN. THERE ARE TWO CATHOLICOSATES OF THE ARMENIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH. HIS HOLINESS ARAM LEADS THE CATHOLICOSATE IN ANTELIAS, LEBANON. HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II, IS THE SUPREME PATRIARCH AND CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS LOCATED AT THE MOTHER SEE IN ETCHMIADZIN, ARMENIA AND PRESIDES OVER THE WORLDWIDE SUPREME SPIRITUAL COUNCIL OF ALL ORTHODOX ARMENIANS.

IN 301, ARMENIA WAS THE FIRST STATE TO ADOPT CHRISTIANITY AND THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE ARMENIAN HOMELAND THEN AND FOR MILLENIA STRETCHES OVER MODERN TURKEY. IN 1914, THERE WERE APPROXIMATELY 5,000 ARMENIAN CHURCHES, SEMINARIES AND SCHOOLS REGISTERED BY THE PATRIARCHATE, WHICH ATTEST TO THIS HISTORIC PRESENCE AND CHRISTIAN FAITH. LESS THAN 50 ARMENIAN CHURCHES ARE UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE TODAY.

FOR CENTURIES, ARMENIANS PAID AND IN MANY PLACES STILL PAY A HIGH PRICE FOR THEIR CHRISTIANITY. THE SEIZURE AND OFTEN DESTRUCTION OF ARMENIAN CHURCH PROPERTY, OF THIS CHRISTIAN LEGACY, THUS PRESENTS ITSELF AS A RIPE AREA TO DEMONSTRATE REFORM AND BEGIN BUILDING CONFIDENCE. LIKE OTHER PERVERSIONS OF HISTORY, MANY OF THESE ANCIENT STRUCTURES (QUITE A FEW MORE THAN A THOUSAND YEARS OLD) WHICH WERE NOT DESTROYED WERE DESECRATED TO REMOVE THEIR TRUE IDENTITY. SITES SUCH AS ANI AND AKHTAMAR ARE A PART OF WORLD CIVILIZATION AND PROGRESS MADE THERE SO FAR TO RESTORE THEM NEEDS TO MOVE TO THE NEXT LEVEL. IN ADDITION, THE MULTITUDE OF SITES, SUCH AS HOLY GARABED MONASTERY IN MUSH, ALSO NEEDS ATTENTION.

THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1461. PATRIARCH MESROB HIMSELF WAS BORN IN TURKEY (AS IS REQUIRED BY TURKISH AUTHORITIES TO BECOME PATRIARCH), ATTENDED THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS IN THE UNITED STATES, THE ARMENIAN SEMINARY AND HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM, AND THE PONTIFICAL UNIVERSTIY OF ST. THOMAS IN ROME. HE WAS ELECTED PATRIARCH IN MARCH 1998 BY A LARGE MARGIN, AND HAS PROVEN TO BE A THOUGHTFUL, SPIRITUAL, AND RESPECTED LEADER.

ALTHOUGH THE POPULATION OF ARMENIANS IN TURKEY IS ESTIMATED AT 70,000 TO 82,000, THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT HAS STATED ANOTHER 30,000 TO 40,000 ARMENIANS FROM ARMENIA WORK IN ISTANBUL. ARMENIANS IN TURKEY ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR PIETY AND LOVE OF THE CHURCH; SERVICES ARE HELD AND ATTENDED DAILY, AND SERVICES ARE REMARKABLY WELL-ATTENDED, WHICH IS A POINT OF PRIDE FOR ALL ARMENIANS AS THESE ARE THE KNOWN REMNANTS OF THE 2,100,000 ARMENIAN POPULATION BEFORE THE GENOCIDE. I SHOULD NOTE THAT THESE NUMBERS DO NOT ACCOUNT FOR THE

PROGENY OF ARMENIAN CHILDREN TAKEN FROM THEIR PARENTS AND/OR FORCIBLY CONVERTED.

TURNING TO THE CURRENT SITUATION, ON MARCH 16, 2005 THE CSCE TOOK TESTIMONY ON THE SITUATION OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE, IN TURKEY. THE SAME TYPES OF PROBLEMS APPLY TO ARMENIANS, AS CAN BE SEEN FROM DR. HOFFMAN'S REPORT. BUT, THESE ISSUES GENERALLY FALL INTO THREE MAIN CATEGORIES:

1. ABILITY TO CONDUCT SERVICES, WHICH INCLUDES THE ABILITY TO TRAIN AND EMPLOY CLERGY;
2. ABILITY TO MAINTAIN ARMENIAN SCHOOLS, WITHOUT CENSORSHIP AND WITH THE ABILITY FOR ANY ARMENIAN STUDENT TO ATTEND WHOSE PARENTS SO DESIRE; AND
3. ABILITY TO FUND, ADMNISTER, AND OPERATE THE CHURCH AND PROPERTIES, INCLUDING RESTORING RELIGIOUS PROPERTIES TO THE RELEVANT RELIGIOUS GROUP, RECTIFYING DENIALS OF PARISHONERS RIGHTS TO GIFT OR BEQUEATH PROPERTY TO SUPPORT THEIR RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS, SELF-GOVERNANCE, AND THE ABILITY TO REPAIR OR IMPROVE PHYSICAL STRUCTURES.

ON MARCH 16, CO-CHAIRMAN SMITH STATED:

The most glaring property issues regarding the Orthodox Theological School of Halki, seized in 1971, when the government nationalized all institutions of higher education.

The continued closure of the only educational institution in Turkey for Orthodox Christian leadership is untenable and unconscionable.

This has had a deleterious effect on the ability of Turkey's Greek Orthodox citizens to train the next generation of clergy.

The Greek Orthodox Church in other communities, like the Armenian Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox and Catholic churches, have been deprived of important cultural sites and places of worship.

Reformers should terminate the ability of the government agencies to seize the property of a religious community, while also simplifying the process for groups to regain clear title to their lost holdings.

Should there be no local community, the property should revert to the religious community and not to the state.

Reportedly, the foreign ministry's reform monitoring committee is advocating for reforms that ensure the return of seized property or the payment of compensation. I certainly hope this happens.

The issue is, indeed, black and white. Property must be returned and expropriations must end.

THIS ISSUE OF ALLOWING CHURCHES TO TRAIN CLERGY SHOULD NOT EXIST. AXIOMATIC TO FREEDOM OF RELIGION IS THE ABILITY TO TRAIN CLERGY TO ADMINISTER RELIGION. DENIAL OR CURTAILMENT OF THAT RIGHT IS NOT ONLY A DENIAL OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION ESTABLISHED BY LAW BUT ALSO COUNTERPRODUCTIVE TO FOSTERING A TOLERANT SOCIETY.

THE ISSUE OF ALLOWING PARISHONERS TO SUPPORT THEIR CHURCH SHOULD ALSO BE A BLACK AND WHITE ISSUE. LAST MONTH, A TURKISH NEWSPAPER REPORTED EFFORTS TO DEPRIVE THE ARMENIAN HOSPITAL "SOORP PURGICH" (HOLY SAVIOR) OF A MULTI MILLION (US DOLLAR) BEQUEST. THE ISTANBUL BUILDING WAS LEFT TO THE HOSPITAL IN 1952 AND THE DEED REGISTERED. BUT IN 1992, THE GOVERNMENT DECLARED THAT THE BEQUEST VIOLATED THE 1936 DECREE DISALLOWING NON-MOSLEMS FROM DONATING REAL ESTATE, AND THE PROPERTY WAS SEIZED AS THE ORIGINAL OWNERS AND THEIR HEIRS WERE GONE.

THE COURTS COMPLIED WITH THE GOVERNMENT. NOT UNTIL THERE WAS AN APPEAL TO THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS DID THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE REFUSE TO APPROVE THE PREARRANGED SALE. PROPER COMPLIANCE WITH THE TREATY OF LAUSANNE OR OTHER STANDARDS PROTECTING RELIGIOUS RIGHTS WOULD HAVE NEVER LET THIS CASE GET SO FAR. INTERESTINGLY, THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT A TURKISH NEWSPAPER COULD REPORT THIS INJUSTICE AND SO FAR WITHOUT REPRISAL.

THE ISSUE OF OBSTACLES TO REPAIRING CHURCHES ALSO RECURS TOO OFTEN. A RECENT EXAMPLE IS THE REPORT ON THE SAMATYA ARMENIAN CHURCH, WHERE PERMITS TO FIX THE ROOF WENT UNISSUED FOR MONTHS. WHEN THE PARISH FIXED THE ROOF ITSELF, THE AUTHORITIES SEALED THE CHURCH DOORS. THIS IS NOT BEHAVIOR COMPATIBLE WITH THE RULE OF LAW OR THE TYPE OF SOCIETY MANY TURKISH PEOPLE WANT TO SEE IN THEIR COUNTRY. BUT, AGAIN, ONE PARISH MEMBER HAD THE COURAGE TO PUBLICLY QUESTION WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BEHAVE THAT WAY TOWARD A MOSQUE AND MORE AND MORE TURKS THEMSELVES UNDERSTAND THAT THIS BEHAVIOR MUST NOT CONTINUE.

UNFORTUNATELY, IN ADDITION TO THE LISTS OF CURRENT PROBLEMS, THE PROBLEMS OF CHRISTIANS IN THE 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, AND 70s NEED TO BE OPENLY DISCUSSED WITHOUT FEAR OF REPRISAL AND WITH AN EYE TO RECONCILIATION. MANY OF THESE PROBLEMS ARE MORE IN THE NATURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS, SUCH AS ACTS OF VIOLENCE, EXTORTION, AND THEFT AGAINST MINORITIES, CHANGING ARMENIAN NAMES TO TURKISH NAMES, PERSECUTION, AND DENIAL OF IDENTITY. A STUDY TITLED "THE CHRISTIAN MINORITIES OF TURKEY" WAS PUBLISHED IN 1979 BY THE CHURCHES COMMITTEE ON MIGRANT WORKERS IN EUROPE WHICH THOROUGHLY DOCUMENTS MUCH OF THAT BEHAVIOR. FORMER PATRIARCH SHNORK KALOUSTIAN ALSO PUBLISHED REPORTS DESCRIBING ADVERSE CONDITIONS, CONFISCATORY ACTS, DENIAL OF ARMENIAN IDENTITY, INTERFERENCE WITH SELF-GOVERNANCE, FOR ARMENIAN CHRISTIANS IN THE 1970s IN TURKEY WHICH I BELIEVE THE CSCE HAS ON FILE.

ACCOUNTS OF OTHER PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY ARMENIANS MORE RECENTLY IN TURKEY INCLUDING VIOLENCE TO CHURCHES AND HOLY PLACES, VIOLENCE AGAINST PERSONS, PERPETUATION OF A HOSTILE ATMOSPHERE AGAINST THE PATRIARCHATE AND ARMENIANS ALSO BEAR THE CSCE'S AND OTHERS' REVIEW AND UNDERSTANDING. THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S RECORD ON REPORTING INFRINGEMENTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT SHOWS IMPROVEMENTS FROM THE PAST BUT STILL DOES NOT DO JUSTICE TO THE SITUATION. FOR EXAMPLE, CONTINUING BREACHES OF ARTICLES 38, 40, 41, 42, AND 43 OF THE TREATY OF LAUSANNE WHICH IN THEORY GUARANTEED ARMENIANS MANY OF THE SAME RELIGIOUS RIGHTS WHICH WERE PROMISED BEFORE AND ARE BEING PROMISED AGAIN ARE SOFTPEDALED OR OVERLOOKED. A SIMPLE COMPARISON WITH OTHER PUBLICLY AVAILABLE REPORTS SHOWS THE DEFICIENCIES.

TODAY, WE ARE ALSO CONCERNED WITH THE FATE OF AN ARMENIAN EVANGELICAL PROTESTANT PASTOR IN TURKEY. HE STRUGGLED AND ENDED UP IN JAIL TO AVOID CONFISCATION OF HIS CHURCH'S PROPERTY IN THE PAST, AND LAST MONTH DISCUSSED THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE ON TELEVISION. THE PAST PATTERN HAS BEEN RETALIATION AND PREEMPTIVE ANTI-ARMENIAN AND ANTI-CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY FOR SUCH BEHAVIOR. OUR HOPE AND OUR PRAYER, HOWEVER, ARE THAT THE HISTORICAL PATTERNS ON THAT SUBJECT WILL ALSO CHANGE, AND THAT THE EXERCISE OF BASIC RELIGIOUS RIGHTS AND BASIC RIGHTS SUCH AS FREEDOM OF SPEECH WILL NOT BE PERSECUTED. HERE, I CAN NOTE THAT THE STUDY ON THE APPLICABILITY OF THE GENOCIDE CONVENTION PROCURED AND RELEASED BY THE TURKISH ARMENIAN RECONCILIATION COMMISSION WAS TRANSLATED INTO TURKISH, PUBLISHED IN THE TURKISH DAILY NEWS, IS AVAILABLE IN TURKEY, AND ACTUALLY SERVES AS A BASIS FOR DISCUSSION ON THE SUBJECT.

THANKFULLY, I CAN AT LEAST SAY THAT THERE ARE MORE MEMBERS OF TURKISH CIVIL SOCIETY WILLING TO DISCUSS THESE PROBLEMS THAN EVER BEFORE AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS SO FAR AT LEAST TACITLY

ALLOWED MORE DISCUSSION TO TAKE PLACE. THAT TREND NEEDS TO CONTINUE.

LIKE THE ARMENIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATIONS IN BOTH COUNTRIES ACCORDING TO A POLL TAKEN JOINTLY BY ARMENIANS AND TURKS, I ALSO BELIEVE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AS WELL AS TURKEY'S LIFTING OF ITS BLOCKADE OF ARMENIA (WHICH IRONICALLY BUT CHARACTERISTICALLY IS ALREADY THE SUBJECT OF TREATY OBLIGATIONS REQUIRING TURKEY TO MAINTAIN AN OPEN BORDER WITH ARMENIA) WOULD BE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS TREND. THESE ARE AREAS LIKE GENOCIDE RECOGNITION WHERE THE UNITED STATES CAN AND SHOULD BE PUBLICLY ENGAGED. THERE IS A LEADERSHIP ROLE FOR THE CSCE TO PLAY HERE AS WELL.

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR EFFORTS IN PROMOTING PROGRESS IN THIS REGARD.

ATTACHMENTS

Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission
Recommendations

to
Concerned Governments
Regarding
Improvement of
Turkish Armenian Relations
April 14, 2004

Introduction

The Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission (“TARC”) was formed in Geneva in July 2001 with the express purpose of working to improve relations between Turkey and Armenia and between Turks and Armenians. The primary mechanism for achieving these goals was and is to promote increased contact on both governmental and non-governmental levels. Significant advances have been registered since 2001. These advances have been more visible in the field of civil society, where the most difficult barriers to direct contact are no longer present and the reconciliation process is not only underway but has assumed courses independent of TARC and official relations. Fundamental differences still exist, but the growing movement to engage directly in an effort to resolve them is exactly what TARC was designed to achieve.

Official contacts between the governments have also grown since 2001, but, it must be acknowledged, have not kept pace. Another of TARC’s purposes was to make recommendations to governments to promote reconciliation, and since its formation the Commission has actively done so, both in public and in private. With this document, TARC presents its consensus recommendations on how to improve official relations.

These recommendations are being provided after substantial deliberations. Consultations have been held with concerned representatives of society from many different points of view. The majority and clearly the mainstream point of view in Armenian and Turkish societies while acknowledging the seriousness of the differences recognizes the need to promote better relations. Thus, our strong recommendation to the government officials is to not only establish opportunities for but also to actively and publicly encourage contacts and confidence building measures between Turkey and Armenia and within their region.

At the same time, TARC is announcing that its work as a commission is ending. TARC’s term was to be one year, but the course of events required a longer period to accomplish our goals. We feel that advances in civil society contacts are now permanent and will only grow in time. We also feel that beyond our recommendations, official relations can now best be continued and advanced independent of the TARC structure. Instead, we have decided to convene an initial meeting of a larger group than TARC’s working membership to discuss the subject of Turkish Armenian rapprochement and reconciliation. This conference is planned for fall of 2004. In addition, we intend to support a new Turkish Armenian consultative group which would meet at least annually to exchange views, review progress, and recommend actions to promote improved relations. TARC’s website, www.tarc.info, will continue to function under the editorship of one Turkish and one Armenian

TARC member. Its mandate is the same as TARC's original purposes and the editors are entrusted with fulfilling that mandate as they see fit.

TARC's progress since 2001 could not have been possible without the critical support of many people and institutions. First among these has been our chairman, David L. Phillips. By publicly thanking him as well as Ted Sorensen, Alex Borraïne and the International Center for Transitional Justice, the Henri Dunant Center, the Vienna Diplomatic Academy, and the Royal United Services Institute, we do not mean to minimize the contributions of so many others who have shared their wisdom, efforts and goodwill towards the cause of a better future for the Turkish and Armenian people. We sincerely thank them all. But, in part, we are making this point just prior to listing our recommendations to give officials and others some comfort in knowing that taking risks to improve relations uncovers support from unanticipated places and yields benefits which may not be immediately visible.

Recommendations

Turks and Armenians have a shared heritage. The ultimate goal of the Turkish and Armenian governments should be to have full bilateral diplomatic relations with open social, economic, and cultural activity between the two neighboring countries. Toward this goal of good neighborly relations, we offer the following recommendations:

- 1. Official Contacts Should Be Further Improved.** Official contacts at the Foreign Minister and other levels have improved substantially since 2001. The presence of Armenian diplomatic representation to the BSEC in Istanbul is to be commended. The governments should accelerate their contacts, devise new frameworks for consultation, and consolidate relations by considering additional treaty arrangements. In the transition to full diplomatic relations, the governments should also consider means of providing diplomatic protection for their nationals in their respective countries.
- 2. Opening of the Turkish Armenian Border Should Be Announced and Implemented in 2004.** Our recommendation is guided by three factors. First, the treaties between the two countries while recognizing the existing borders also call for unhampered transportation and trade across these borders. Second, an open border would significantly improve the economic condition of people living on both sides of the border; and third, an open border is consistent with establishing a basis for normalized bilateral relations and with the international system favored by both countries.
- 3. The Two Governments Should Publicly Support Civil Society Programs Focused on Education, Science, Culture, and Tourism.** Since 2001, some of the most successful civil society exchanges between Armenians and Turks have taken place in these areas. They deserve credit and encouragement. They also show great promise in dealing with problems in a creative and productive manner. Governments should be more supportive of these efforts by supporting and even initiating programs such

as guest lectureships and studies by Turkish and Armenian academics and scientists, joint studies by Turkish and Armenian students, summer studies and targeted scholarship programs, and projects which generate mutual understanding and respect.

- 4. Standing Mechanisms for Cooperation on Humanitarian Disaster Assistance and Health Care Should Be Established.** Both Armenia and Turkey are prone to natural disasters, most notably but not exclusively earthquakes. The record of cooperation in emergencies between the two countries can easily be improved to the benefit of all. In addition, both countries have the opportunity to develop substantial goodwill with each other by increasing and publicizing cooperation in health care and medicine.

- 5. Security and Confidence Building Measures between Turkey and Armenia Should Be Enhanced.** Our meetings have taught that the overwhelming mainstream of both Turkish and Armenian people desire and are best served by peaceful relations. In both Turkey and Armenia, security, antiterrorism, and related issues are important concerns. Thus, in the process of improving relations, security issues should be directly addressed through international and regional security arrangements and bilateral contacts in a way that will generate public confidence.

- 6. The Turkish and Armenian People Need to Develop More Confidence that Their Governments are Working to Surmount the Difficulties Related to the Past.** Those who have followed TARC's work know how difficult this issue was for us. The opinion of the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), carried out upon our referral for a legal analysis, is on the TARC website for consideration, is on the TARC website for consideration: "The Applicability of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide to Events which Occurred During the Early Twentieth Century."

Conclusion

We conclude with the same idea with which we began this process. There are substantial differences, but there is a growing good faith trend toward resolving those differences. That trend specifically is toward moving beyond the state which existed for decades and is strongly in favor of increased direct contacts as a means to mutual understanding. We recognize that some of our recommendations may appear ambitious in the circumstances; in conclusion, therefore, we re-emphasize the need for governments to support those who are ready to work for improved relations. Rapprochement and reconciliation in our case will be a process not an event, and the difficulty of that process should not be underestimated.