February 6, 2009

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States of America

Dear Mr. President,

As presidents of Turkish American community organizations nationwide, we congratulate you on assuming the Presidency of the United States of America. We wish you success in confronting the many daunting challenges facing our nation and the world today.

We would be remiss in our obligations and rights as United States citizens, however, to neglect to highlight a stumbling block in restoring America’s standing abroad.

It would be stating the obvious to observe that Armenian special interest lobbies are pressuring your Administration and Congress to label the tragic events in the waning hours of the Ottoman Empire during World War I as the crime of genocide. To dispute the characterization as unsubstantiated by the weight of reliable evidence is not to withhold sympathy from Armenians and others, including Ottoman Muslims, who also suffered harrowing casualties during World War I. And to accept this one-sided characterization unilaterally by ignoring independent and impartial assessments by Middle East historians and scholars would be both grossly unfair and potentially incendiary to Southeast Europe, the Caucasus and the Middle East.

History is replete with examples of false narratives born from bigotries that advance a political agenda rather than the truth. The Armenian claim of passive victimhood stands on such shaky historical footing. The attached partial list of scholars should demonstrate that, at the very least, the question of whether to apply the term genocide or not divides the scholarly community. Many reputable scholars, mainly historians of the Ottoman Empire, World War I and the Middle East have refrained from applying the term to describe the tragic civilian losses suffered in the early 20th century in the Ottoman Empire. Their work also diverges from, in many cases contradicts, the historical narrative from which descends the charge of genocide.
To quarrel with a genocide characterization—the crime of crimes, which requires exacting standards of proof as required by solemn treaty obligations and constitutional due process—is not to deny lesser crimes or atrocities. In fact, the Ottoman government itself prosecuted and convicted nearly 1,400 individuals, executing scores, including a provincial governor, for crimes committed against Armenians. On the other hand, the equally well documented massacres and ethnic cleansing of Ottoman Muslims in Eastern Anatolia committed directly or assisted by Armenian rebels, which were acknowledged by independent observers, are routinely ignored or denied today.

The number of Armenians who died in the World War I years and their causes can at best be conjectured; and, conjectures are not legally admissible evidence. Scholars in Ottoman history generally agree that the Armenian deaths resulted from a multiplicity of causes: inter-communal warfare, the conditions of the forced relocations, murder, famine, disease, deficient medical care and austere conditions of life during wartime. The fact remains that there is no reliable assessment of the Armenian death toll or its categorization according to causation.

Further, contrary to assertions made by Armenian proponents, scholars in Ottoman history would also generally agree that there is no record of Ottoman Muslim animosity towards Armenians based on religion or ethnicity. Many Armenians in fact served at the highest echelons of the Ottoman government and the Ottoman parliament.

Few people throughout history, separated by ethnicity and religion, have shared such peaceful co-existence and developed such cultural affinity, as Turks and Armenians have for over 900 years under the Seljuk and Ottoman administrations. Nothing we argue in this letter should be construed as an effort to diminish the loss of innocent Armenian lives. We mourn their losses as ours and hope they too will find it in their hearts to mourn for our ancestors.

Mr. President,

Your Inaugural address proclaimed an era of responsibility. Turkey has shown such responsibility with respect to this contentious issue. It has voiced willingness to accept the findings by an international commission of scholars and experts with access to all relevant archives, including those of Armenian organizations that remain closed today. Armenia should be urged equally to accept the formation and conclusions of such a commission. We see such an effort as the fairest method for assessing the truth, which will pave the way for reconciliation, in lieu of politically charged legislative or executive decisions by third parties.

On behalf of Turkish Americans nationwide, we thank you for your consideration of our views and concerns and extend once again our congratulations and best wishes for your success.

(Signatory list as attached)
Signatories List

SIGNED BY (as of February 5, 2009)
(Signatures on File)

Niyazi Ozkiroglu
American Association of Crimean Turks

Esen Erdemir
American Turkish Association of Houston

Talha F. Uzun
American Turkish Association of Indiana

Demet Cabbar
American Turkish Association of Washington, DC

Tayfun Selen
Anadolu Club Inc. New York

Nurten Ural
Assembly of Turkish American Associations

Ali Nasibov
Azerbaijan New York Association

Tomris Azeri
Azerbaijan Society of America

Ahmet Erentok
Azerbaijan Turkey America Foundation

Ergin Cherif
Balkan Turks of America Association

Ilhan Velioglu
Delaware Valley Muslim Association Selimiye Mosque

Kaya Boztepe
Federation of Turkish American Associations

Serap Odabas Yigit
Florida Turkish American Association
Yilmaz Arhan  
**Istanbul Sports, Cultural and Education Center**

Mehves Sonmez  
**Istanbul University Alumni Association of USA**

Nureddin Demircan  
**Karacay Turks Mosque and Culture Center, Inc.**

Timur Edib  
**Maryland American Turkish Association**

Ilhan Bayram  
**Mevlana Mosque Association**

Atilla Pak  
**Middle East Technical University Alumni Association**

Cigdem Crawford  
**North Florida Turkish American Cultural Association**

Atilla Soran  
**Pittsburgh Turkish American Association**

Gokhan Gelisen  
**Society of Turkish American Architects, Engineers and Scientists, Inc.**

Goknur McAvoy  
**Southern New England Turkish American Cultural Association**

Abdullah Khoja  
**Turkestanian American Association**

Yavuz Atila  
**Turkish American Association of California**

Ernie Kirk  
**Turkish American Association of Central Ohio**
(Signatories List cont.)

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Turkish American Association of Louisiana

Saduman Gurbuz  
Turkish American Association of Northern Texas

David Shultz  
Turkish American Association of San Antonio

Refik Gedelec  
Turkish American Chamber of Restaurateurs

Mehmet Reyhan  
Turkish American Community Center

Hatice Dinc  
Turkish American Cultural Alliance of Chicago

Didem Seyhoglu  
Turkish American Cultural Association of Michigan

Sevket Acar  
Turkish American Cultural Society of Colorado

Halil Turan  
Turkish American Cultural Association of Florida

Mazlum Kosma  
Turkish American Cultural Association of Georgia

Erkut Gomulu  
Turkish American Cultural Society of New England

Arif Gecir  
Turkish American Eyup Sultan Cultural Center

Engin Turkalp  
Turkish American Friendship Association of Hawaii

Ibrahim Onaral  
Turkish American Friendship Society of the United States

Serdar Karakuru  
Turkish American Medical Association, Inc.
(Signatories List cont.)

Fahri Ekiz  
**Turkish American Muslim Culture Association**

Hakan Kurt  
**Turkish American Youth Association**

Gokhan Mutlu  
**Turkish Children Foster Care**

G. Lincoln McCurdy  
**Turkish Coalition of America**

Hamit Demirkan  
**Turkish Cultural Alliance Inc., NY Hars Birligi**

Ali Sencer  
**Turkish Cypriot Aid Society**

Mehmet Hassan  
**Turkish Cypriot Cultural and Educational Association**

Mesut Vardar  
**Turkish Society of Rochester**

Begum Dinlec  
**Turkish Women’s League of America, Inc.**

Ferit Demirbulakli  
**Turkocagi, Inc.**

Fatih Demirci  
**United American Muslim Association of New York**

Abdurrahman Bezirkan  
**Young Turks Cultural Aid Society**

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The notion that “Most Western Scholars” consider the Ottoman-Armenian tragedy as “Genocide” is untrue.

Below is a partial listing of scholars, who have refrained from applying the genocide label to the events of 1915 or whose work exposes parts of the traditional “Armenian Genocide” narrative as significantly flawed.

####

**Batkay, Timothy**, Associate Professor of Political Science, Montclair State University

**Childs, Timothy** (dec.), former Professor of Ottoman History, Johns Hopkins University

**Courbage, Youssef**, Researcher, National Institute of Demographic Studies, Paris, France. Author of *Christians and Muslims under Islam* (1992), Fayard Press

**Cuthell, David C.**, Executive Director of the Institute of Turkish Studies and Associate Professor of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University

**Davison, Roderic** (dec.), former Professor of Ottoman and Turkish history, George Washington University. Author of *Turkey: A Short History* (1998), Eothen Press, 3rd edition

**Duben, Alan**, Professor of History, Istanbul Bilgi University

**Dumont, Paul**, Chairman of Turcology Department, March Bloch University, Strasbourg, France. Author of *Mustapha Kemal invents modern Turkey* (2006), Complex Press

**Dunér, Bertil**, former Senior Researcher, The Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Stockholm, Sweden.

**Dyer, Gwynne**, Military Historian and Journalist, Author of *Turkish 'Falsifiers' and Armenian 'Deceivers': Historiography and the Armenian Massacres*, Middle Eastern Studies 12 (1976)

**Erickson, Edward J.**, Author and Researcher, Birmingham University, Retired Lieutenant-Colonel (U.S. Army), Author of *Ordered To Die, A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War* (2000), Greenwood Press

**Fargues, Philippe**, Member, National Institute of Demographic Studies, Paris, France. Author of *Christians and Muslims under Islam* (1992), Fayard Press
Fromkin, David, Professor of International Relations, History, and Law, Boston University. Author of *A Peace To End All Peace* (1989), Avon Books


Gunter, Michael M., Professor of Political Science, Tennessee Technical University. Author of “Pursuing the Just Cause of Their People”: *A Study of Contemporary Armenian Terrorism* (1986), Greenwood Press

Hurewitz, Jacob Coleman (dec.), former Professor of Middle Eastern Politics, Columbia University. Author of *Middle East Politics: The Military Dimension* (1982), Westview Press

Jäckel, Eberhard, Professor Emeritus of Modern World History, Stuttgart University

Levy, Avigdor, Professor of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, Brandeis University. Author of *Jews, Turks, and Ottomans: A Shared History* (2002), Syracuse University Press

Lewis, Bernard, Professor Emeritus of Middle Eastern History, Princeton University. Author of *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (1961), Oxford University Press, 3rd edition

Lewy, Guenter, Professor Emeritus of Middle Eastern History, Massachusetts University. Author of *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide* (2007), University of Utah Press, 2nd edition

Lowry, Heath, M. Kemal Ataturk Professor of Ottoman and Modern Turkish Studies, Princeton University. Author of *The Story Behind ‘Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story’* (1990), Isis Press

Mango, Andrew, Author, Historian and Researcher, University of London. Author of *Ataturk: The Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey* (2002), Overlook TP and *The Turks Today* (2004), Overlook TP

Mantran, Robert, (dec.) Former Professor of Turcology, University of Aix-Marseille, France. Author of *History of Turkey* (1993), University Presses of France


Nora, Pierre, former Professor of Contemporary History, The School of High Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS, Paris), Member of the French academy, Paris, France
Oberling, Pierre, Professor of Ethonology, Hunter College, CUNY.

Rémond René (dec.), former president, The National Foundation of Political Sciences. Author of Les Droites en France (1982), Aubier Montaigne

Roux, Jean-Paul, Former Director of Research (CNRS), National Center for Scientific Research, Paris, France. Author of Mustapha Kemal Ataturk and New Turkey (1982), Maisonneuve et Larose

Rustow, Dunkwart A. (dec.), former Distinguished Professor of History, CUNY Graduate School. Author of Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey (1964), Princeton University Press

Salt, Jeremy, Visiting Associate Professor, Bilkent University. Author of Imperialism, Evangelism and the Ottoman Armenians 1878-1896 (1993), Routledge Press and The Unmaking of the Middle East (2006), University of California Press

Shaw, Stanford J. (dec.), former Professor of Ottoman and Turkish History, UCLA. Author of History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey (1977), Cambridge University Press and From Empire to Republic: The Turkish War of National Liberation, 1918-1923 (2001) Turkish Historical Society


Strachan, Hew, Professor of Contemporary History, Oxford University. Author of The First World War (2004), Viking Press

Veinstein, Giles, Professor of Turkish and Ottoman History, Collège de France. Author of Government and Society in Ottoman 16th and 18th centuries (1994), Variorum Press

Wieviorka, Annette, Senior Researcher (CNRS), National Center for Scientific Research, Paris, France

Williams, Brian, Associate Professor of History, University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth

Yapp, Malcolm E., Professor Emeritus of History, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies

Zarcone, Thierry, Senior Researcher in Turkish history (CNRS), National Center for Scientific Research, Paris, France. Author of Turkey: From Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Ataturk (2005), Gallimard Press