



ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA

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ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY APPLAUDS FRANCE FOR STRONGLY AFFIRMING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Washington, DC – The Armenian Assembly welcomes the continued commitment by the French parliament to keep the history of the Armenian Genocide inviolable despite calls from Turkey to drop an Armenian Genocide bill or risk damaging bilateral ties.

Yesterday, the French National Assembly voted 106 to 19 to approve legislation that would penalize Armenian Genocide denial with fines and a jail term. The bill must still be approved by France's upper house of parliament and signed by President Jacques Chirac, who called on Turkey to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide during a recent state visit to Armenia.

According to The Associated Press, Chirac asked, "Should Turkey recognize the genocide of Armenia to join the European Union? Honestly, I believe so. Each country grows by acknowledging its dramas and errors of the past."

In the week leading up to the vote, the Turkish government warned France that bilateral relations would suffer if lawmakers approved the bill. A statement issued by the Turkish Foreign Ministry, criticized the vote saying, "French-Turkish relations....have been dealt a severe blow today as a result of the irresponsible false claims of French politicians who do not see the political consequences of their actions."

The Armenian government, for its part, called the vote a "natural continuation of France's principled and consistent defenses of human and historic rights and values."

The statement from Foreign Affairs Minister Vartan Oskanian also said, "To adopt such a decision is the French Parliament's sovereign right and is understandable. What we don't understand is the Turkish government's instigation of extremist public relations, especially while Turkey itself has a law that does exactly the same thing and punishes those who even use the term genocide or venture to discuss those events."

ORHAN PAMUK AWARDED NOBEL PRIZE IN LITERATURE; ASSEMBLY INTERVIEW WITH HRANT DINK

While the passage of the French bill was making international headlines, news broke that Turkey's best-known writer Orhan Pamuk was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Last year, Pamuk was prosecuted under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code and charged with "insulting Turkishness" for telling a Swiss newspaper that "30,000 Kurds and one million Armenians were killed in these lands, and nobody but me dares talk about it." The charges have since been dropped.

The Armenian Assembly spoke with Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, from his home in Istanbul, on these latest developments, including new “denigration” charges filed against him for acknowledging the Armenian Genocide.

Reflecting on the passage of the French bill, Dink added “I do see some positive results coming out of this....The Armenian and Turkish governments, both states, should see there is no alternative to dialogue. There is no alternative to good neighborliness. There is no alternative to opening the borders and joint action.”

Dink also welcomed Orhan Pamuk’s award, saying “for those of us struggling for democracy in Turkey, it is a great honor and great joy that our beloved friend...has made so many great contributions to the pursuit of democracy, has ascended to the world’s highest pedestal of the Nobel Prize in Literature.”

“It is not just the people living in this country today that his prize belongs to,” Dink continued. “It also belongs to the people who for centuries populated this land and created this culture. And today, the culture that Orhan Pamuk presented to the world, in the form of literature, is the culture of all those people who lived and created on this land, including the Armenians.”

The interview concluded with Dink’s thoughts on his pending trial. “In March 2007 I will be tried for having stated ‘yes what happened was genocide’ in an interview with Reuters,” he explained. “What else can we call it if my people who lived there for 4,000 years, disappeared without a trace, and its culture disappeared? This was my message and this is why I’m being indicted.”

Earlier this month, Dink was awarded the prestigious Bjornson Prize for Literature for his publications on the Armenian Genocide. He will accept the award, along with a cash prize, during a ceremony in Molde, Norway on November 24.

The Armenian Assembly of America is the largest Washington-based nationwide organization promoting public understanding and awareness of Armenian issues. It is a 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt membership organization.

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Photograph:



Caption: Hrant Dink