



## Governmental and Parliamentary Recognition of the Genocides of the Armenians, Assyrians and Hellenes

*Panayiotis Diamadis*

Often forgotten in debates around aspects of genocide studies is that the term “genocide” is a legal one. It was coined for the purposes of defining crimes on a magnitude undefined in a legal context until 1944. With this starting point, we can present—a delineation of some of the numerous controversies surrounding governmental and parliamentary recognition of the Armenian, Hellenic,<sup>1</sup> and Assyrian Genocides. Focus questions are utilised to frame the explanation of the relationship between domestic and international politics, and legislative recognition of the Armenian, Hellenic, and Assyrian Genocides.

Broadly speaking, current controversies may be grouped around two key focal questions. What constitutes “recognition”? Why does formal recognition by governmental and parliamentary bodies matter?

Given that the definition of the crime of genocide in United Nations’ Genocide Convention of 1948 was based on the Jewish, Armenian, Assyrian, and Hellenic experiences of state-sponsored mass murder, and most member-states have signed the Convention, may it not be argued that this constitutes recognition? If this stands, the controversy then becomes one over reaffirmation of existing legislative recognition.

According to the handwritten notes of Raphael Lemkin, lead author of the United Nations’ Convention on the Punishment and Prevention of the Crime of Genocide, he began developing a legal definition for the crime without a name sometime in the early 1940s, when the true extent of the *Shoah* was still largely hidden from public view by World War II. In Resolution 260 (III), adopted by the General Assembly on 9 December 1948, “forcibly transferring children of the group to another group” was included as an act of genocide, one “of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such.” While the Nazis condemned Jewish children to death, Armenian, Assyrian, and Hellene children were systematically removed from their families and forcibly assimilated by Muslim Turks and Kurds. Writing for the *New York Times* while the United Nations was debating the final wording of the Convention, Lemkin stated: “Genocide is no new phenomenon nor has it been

utterly ignored in the past. ... The massacres of Greeks and Armenians by the Turks prompted diplomatic action without punishment.”<sup>2</sup>

These controversies can be examined through events and actions of those involved in a range of countries – a range that represents a diversity of positions and approaches to these controversies – the United States, Australia, France, Israel, Turkey, Sweden, Greece,<sup>3</sup> and Cyprus. This group represents federations (the United States, Australia), national-religious republics (Greece, Israel, Turkey), and secular republics (France, Sweden, Cyprus). The Commonwealth of Australia is fascinating because the island continent nation has played a uniquely broad set of roles with regard to the genocides of the indigenous peoples of Anatolia that is disproportionate to its usual influence on the world stage.

This set of nation-states was selected because of the relationships they share with the genocides of the Armenians, Assyrians, and Hellenes. The Ottoman Empire and its successor state, the Republic of Turkey, were the perpetrators and Turkey continues to lead international denial efforts. At the September 1919 Sivas Congress, Mustafa Kemal formally launched his revolution. By 1921, Kemal and his followers were the effective rulers of Anatolia barring the Smyrna Zone, as exhibited by their treaty agreements with the Soviet Union, Italy and France. While formal recognition of Kemal’s Republic of Turkey was not forthcoming until October 1923, his was the effective government in the areas where the second phase of the Genocides were conducted by forces loyal to him at that time.

The modern states of Greece, Cyprus, and Armenia were the lands where the majority of survivors found safe haven. As the official states of the victim groups, these three have a special role as post-genocide havens and identity centers. Large numbers of Armenians and Assyrians also rebuilt lives and communities in neighbouring states such as French Lebanon and Syria, British Mesopotamia, the Soviet Union, and countries further afield, such as France ~~itself~~, the United States, Argentina, and others. Australia, the United States, France, Israel (then British Palestine), and Sweden all provided means of rescue (funds, clothes, food) as well as invaluable eyewitness testimonies. These states also became home to sizable diaspora communities of at least one of the targeted groups. While Hellenic migration was from other sources as well, for the most part Armenian and Assyrian communities in these lands are genocide refugee communities. This is the historic background to the current controversies over parliamentary recognition of the Genocides of the Armenians, Assyrians, and Hellenes.

Aside from historical background and certain moral concerns, in the world of *realpolitik*, it is geostrategic interest that to a large extent determines the course of action national legislatures pursue. France and Sweden see their relationship to Armenian genocide recognition through the prism of European Union interests and policies. For the Hellenic Republic, genocide recognition is secondary compared to the continued threat to Greek sovereignty in western Thrace and the Aegean Islands. For Cyprus also, the practical concern of having 38 per cent of its territory under Turkish occupation since 1974 takes precedence over recognition of genocides.

Of greatest interest are the positions of Israel and the United States. Between the 1950s and the 2000s, Israel was a stalwart ally of Ankara. The election of the Justice and Welfare Party (AKP) and its “new” ambitions for a regional “Pax Ottomana” has brought a serious rift between Ankara and Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> Immediately after he took office in 2003, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan began systematically downgrading Turkey’s strategic alliance with Israel. Starting gradually, and accelerating after Hamas won the 2006 Palestinian elections, Turkey and Israel’s diplomatic ties began seriously deteriorating at the January 2009 World Economic Forum. During a heated debate with Israeli President Shimon Peres on Israel’s Gaza offensive, then Prime Minister Erdoğan accused Israel of barbarism, telling Peres, “When it comes to killing, you know well how to kill.”<sup>5</sup>

Israel’s tensions with Turkey reached a crest with the May 2010 *Mavi Marmara* incident, when the Erdoğan government sponsored a pro-Hamas flotilla from Turkey to Gaza. The flotilla’s flagship, the *MV Mavi Marmara*, was owned and controlled by the Turkish NGO, the IHH (Humanitarian Relief Foundation), which Israel believes has ties to al-Qaeda. The publically stated aim of the flotilla was to undermine Israel’s maritime blockade of Hamas-controlled Gaza. According to Israel, the vessel’s passengers included armed terrorists who tried to kill Israel Defense Force naval commandos when they boarded to enforce the blockade. In the ensuing battle, Israeli commandos killed nine passengers.<sup>6</sup> In March 2012, then-commander of the Turkish navy, Admiral Murat Bilgel, outlined Turkey’s strategic objective “to operate ... on the high seas,” a reference to the eastern Mediterranean. In late December 2013, Turkey took a major step in altering the naval balance, contracting the construction of a multi-purpose amphibious assault ship that can function as an aircraft carrier, potentially providing Turkey an unprecedented measure of sea control in the region. With Ankara viewing Israel as a strategic threat – along with Cyprus and Greece – “power projection to any theater of operation” is the purpose of the new vessel, according to Michael Tanchum.<sup>7</sup>

This maritime rivalry - enhanced by the recent discovery of major deposits of natural gas in the seabed between Israel and Cyprus - has returned to the fore the question of recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Israel. For some time, it has been used as a card by Israeli governments in relations with Ankara. For the first time, an Israeli parliamentary committee held a discussion on the “Jewish people’s recognition of the Armenian genocide” on Monday 26 December 2011. During the discussion, lawmakers, historians and members of the Israeli Armenian community stressed the Jewish state’s moral obligation to officially recognise the genocide. The committee did not, however, make any decisions or issue any declaration, and will meet again on the issue in the future. The Knesset’s previous hearings on the subject were only behind the closed doors of its foreign and defence committee.<sup>8</sup>

Committee chairman Alex Miller (*Yisrael Beiteinu* Party) said the discussion would focus on the “educational and academic” aspects of the issue, such as the correct way to address it in schools and universities, rather than its security and diplomatic angles. Then Knesset speaker and current President of the state of Israel, Reuven Rivlin, told the committee at the start of its debate that “[t]he subject has not arisen at the Knesset because things happened between Israel and Turkey; not

because we want to exploit a political situation in order to settle accounts.” A similarly cautious tone was exhibited by foreign ministry representative Irit Lillian: “Our relations with them [Turkey] are so fragile today, it is not right to push them over the red line ... Such recognition at this stage could have severe ramifications”. The response from those who initiated the hearing is also interesting. Ariyeh Eldad (National Union party) stated: “In the past it was wrong to bring up the issue because our ties with Turkey were good; now it is wrong because our ties with them are bad. When will the time be right?” His *Meretz* counterpart Zehava Gal-On said Israel had a “moral and historic obligation” to recognise the genocide of a million and a half Armenians, “especially when we are still struggling against Holocaust denial. The Israeli educational system cannot silence the Armenian genocide.”<sup>9</sup>

As a Member of the Knesset, Reuven Rivlin was an advocate of Israel’s recognition of the Genocide of the Armenians. As President, he did not add his signature on an annual petition calling for Israel to officially recognise the genocide. This action was commonly interpreted as arising from apparent concern not to further harm Israel’s strained relations with Turkey. Prior to his election to the Presidency, Rivlin had told fellow Knesset members “it’s unthinkable that the Knesset ignore this tragedy. We demand that people don’t deny the Holocaust, and we can’t ignore the tragedy of another nation.” During a 2013 interview with Israel Army Radio, Rivlin highlighted that Israel must find a way to “fulfil its moral obligation of remembering wrongs done to others.”<sup>10</sup>

Following the Israeli President’s lead, in October 2015, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs passed a resolution stating that “politics” must not “sway our moral obligation to recognise” the Armenian Genocide, calling on American Jewish community organisations last week to lobby Congress and the White House to formally recognise the Genocide.<sup>11</sup> Given the current situation in the Middle East, Jerusalem’s official position is unlikely to change radically any time soon.<sup>12</sup>

For the United States, Ankara was the cornerstone of NATO’s southern flank during the Cold War. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey was scheduled to play a key part in efforts to contain the Islamic Republic of Iran, Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, and other Middle Eastern states. As acknowledged by Jewish American leader Abe Foxman,<sup>13</sup> with the quiet backing of certain American Jewish organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Washington powerbrokers have resisted efforts to recognise the Armenian Genocide. Despite a realignment of interests in recent years, Congress remains reluctant to take the step of full recognition.

In what was described as “a dramatic U-turn over the organization’s position”, the Anti-Defamation League issued a statement of recognition on 21 August 2007. The key part of the statement reads:

We have never negated but have always described the painful events of 1915-1918 perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire against the Armenians as massacres and atrocities. On reflection, we have come to share the view of Henry Morgenthau, Sr. that the consequences of

those actions were indeed tantamount to genocide. If the word genocide had existed then, they would have called it genocide.<sup>14</sup>

The same statement also confirms the ADL's continued opposition to Congressional recognition of the Genocide of the Armenians, using language that appears *ad nauseum* in the correspondence of office bearers who do not wish to publically express acknowledgement of the destruction of Anatolia's indigenous peoples as genocide:

We continue to firmly believe that a congressional resolution on such matters is a counterproductive diversion and will not foster reconciliation between Turks and Armenians and may put at risk the Turkish Jewish community and the important multilateral relationship between Turkey, Israel and the United States.<sup>15</sup>

There has also been a major shift in the Australian-Turkish relationship in the last two years. The ripples of the twin resolutions of the Parliament of New South Wales reaffirming and recognising the Genocides of the Greeks, Armenians, and Assyrians are steadily spreading. The "misplaced relationship" (as Peter Stanley labelled it in his article for *Eureka Street*<sup>16</sup>) has had an impact on many levels. The immature response of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has unmasked the feeble base of the supposed "friendship" built around Anzac Cove.

As featured on the Australian Broadcast Corporation's *7.30 Report*,<sup>17</sup> Turkish officials have threatened to deny visas to New South Wales state MPs who supported recognition of the genocides. In the words of the Consul-General, Ms Gulseren Celik, "We expect Australians to show the same kind of respect that we have shown to their history and their ancestry," she said. "Those individuals who show no respect to our history will not be welcome in Turkey."<sup>18</sup> In a statement issued on 7 May 2013, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ankara declared: "We strongly condemn and reject this motion which is in no way compatible with historic facts." The statement labels the motions "unacceptable claims directed towards Turkey and the Turkish identity," calling on Australian parliamentarians to "take timely action against initiatives carrying anti-Turkish content and hate-speech."<sup>19</sup>

Then NSW Premier, Barry O'Farrell, denounced the attempted interference in domestic affairs as "a terrible indictment ... of the freedoms fought for" in 1915. Christian Democratic Party leader, the Reverend Fred Nile, who proposed the parliamentary motion, described the Consul-General's comments as "disgraceful." Reverend Nile stated, "It's very disappointing that they would then try to ban any members of parliament who voted for the motion from attending any celebration at Gallipoli."<sup>20</sup>

On 24 April 2014, Australia's Treasurer, the Hon. Joe Hockey MP, became the country's most senior government minister to place on record the historical reality of the Armenian Genocide. In a statement prepared for the 99th anniversary commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, the third most senior member of the federal government stated: "Today we gather to remember the 1.5 million people who perished in the genocide.... Back in 1915, the word 'genocide' did not exist ...

But there is simply no other word for what happened to the Armenian people of Ottoman Turkey.”<sup>21</sup>

Ankara’s response was swift, especially behind the political scenes. Amongst its actions was reported to have been returning 150 tickets to the ceremony to mark the Centenary of the landings of the ANZAC (Australia New Zealand Army Corps) on the Gallipoli Peninsula on 25 April 2015.<sup>22</sup> In an effort to soothe the inflamed relationship with Ankara, Australia’s Foreign Minister the Hon. Julie Bishop MP wrote to the Australian Turkish Advocacy Alliance on 4 June 2014, reiterating that Australia has a long-standing approach “not to become involved in this sensitive debate.

The Australian Government acknowledges the devastating effects which the tragic events at the end of the Ottoman Empire have had on later generations and on their identity, heritage and culture. We do not, however, recognise these events as ‘genocide.’ and on their identity, heritage and culture. We do not, however, recognise these events as ‘genocide.’<sup>23</sup>

While this appeased Ankara for a time, pressures on Canberra continued unabated.<sup>24</sup> Hockey was forced to abandon plans to speak at a ceremony marking the Centenary of the Armenian Genocide. The grandson of a survivor, Hockey informed *The Australian* national newspaper: “My views in relation to the events that occurred 100 years ago in Turkey are well known. I’ll certainly be at the event, but I’ll leave it to Geoffrey Robertson to do the speaking.”<sup>25</sup> Having previously confirmed with organisers he would be addressing the commemoration, the decisive pressure came via a telephone call from the Prime Minister himself, the Hon. Tony Abbott MHR. The Australian bureaucratic attitude to Ankara’s denial is summarised in the following extract from a Foreign Ministry document, prepared in January 2015:

We are working closely in the G20, the United Nations and other multilateral fora to lift growth and create jobs, to boost trade and investment, and to address global security challenges, including the situations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, and confronting foreign fighters and violent extremism.

In that context, the Gallipoli centenary will be an important moment of reflection and commemoration for both countries, and recognises the relationship as an exemplary model of reconciliation and friendship between two former enemies after the events that occurred at Gallipoli nearly 100 years ago during World War I.<sup>26</sup>

There is more at stake here than bruised egos and the industry built around Anzac Cove. The response of the Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry is illustrative of essential paradoxes that the Turkish state faces: How does Turkish society face the fact of the genocides of the indigenous Hellenes, Armenians, and Assyrians between 1914 and 1924—and why is discussion of the genocides labelled “hate speech” in Australia, yet there are commemorations and scholarly events of them in Turkey? As

evidenced by the 10 March 2015 Australian Turkish Advocacy Alliance statement on reaction to the unveiling of a monument to Mustafa Kemal in a park in central Sydney:

We suggest that the backlash over this monument shows how deeply the extremist Armenian Lobby and its followers hate Turkey, and all things Turkish. Their hatred cannot be quelled. We are saddened that they are so blinded by prejudice that they would protest even these outstanding words of reconciliation. We are deeply offended that they would even oppose words of reconciliation. This is not, of course, the first time the Armenian lobby has sought to politicise the ANZAC tradition. **It is the Armenian lobby's almost singular obsession to try and stain the friendship between Australia and Turkey with their allegations of Genocide.**<sup>27</sup> (bold in the original)

The ossified denialist approach of the Turkish diplomatic corps to these questions has been exposed by recent events. The Australian evidence on the Genocides including contemporary media reports, prisoner-of-war statements and the letters, diaries and publications of humanitarian relief workers highlighted by state and federal parliamentary resolutions and speeches, the *7.30 Report*, and other media reports, has long been available, yet until the 1990s, were little utilised by advocates for parliamentary recognition. My "Precious and Honoured Guests of the Ottoman Government" published in 2003 was the first substantial study of the records of Australian and other Commonwealth prisoners of war involving the genocides of the indigenous Hellenes, Armenians and Assyrians of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>28</sup> The efforts of scholars to return this material to its former place in Australian historiography has begun producing results in the effort to secure parliamentary recognition at the state and federal levels, as seen with the motions of the South Australian and New South Wales Parliaments in 2009<sup>29</sup> and 2013 respectively. Australian society is only beginning to see the impacts of these combined efforts.

### **What Constitutes Recognition?**

The definition of the crime of genocide in United Nations' Genocide Convention of 1948 was based on the Jewish, Armenian, Assyrian, and Hellenic experiences of state-sponsored mass murder. In the opening paragraph of the chapter on "Genocide" in his 1944 work, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, Lemkin states that the term *genocide* "is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of the essential foundations of life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves" Attacks on the family unit constitute biological methods of genocide. Lemkin specifically cited the Ottoman Turkish Empire as another recurring example in the history of genocide: "The children can be taken away from a given group for the purpose of educating them within the framework of another human group, racial, religious, national or ethnical."<sup>30</sup> Robert Kempner, responsible for preparing the cases against the leading

Nazis at Nuremberg, had earlier written a legal paper on the Armenian genocide. The state-sponsored forced transfer of Christian Hellene, Armenian and Assyrian children by the Ottoman state, its auxiliaries and successors between the 14th and 19th centuries became an integral part of the Hellenic, Armenian and Assyrian Genocides (1914–24) and a key historical precedent to the inclusion of the forced transfer of children as an act of genocide.<sup>31</sup> As most member-states of the United Nations have signed the Convention, there is an argument that this constitutes recognition of the genocides of the indigenous peoples of Anatolia and Mesopotamia.

Lemkin's published and private papers make it clear that this pioneer in the field of international justice was responding to the mass murder of Jews, Armenians, Assyrians and Hellenes when he coined the term "genocide." The August 1933 massacre of some 3,000 Christian Assyrians by the Iraqi state combined with the earlier memories of the slaughter of Armenians, Assyrians and Hellenes by Turks between 1914 and 1924 led Lemkin to launch a 15 year campaign to develop international legislation which aimed to deter and prevent genocide. He presented his first proposal to outlaw such "acts of barbarism" to the Legal Council of the League of Nations in Madrid the same year. While this first effort failed, Lemkin's passion for this cause did not.

In his unpublished essay, "Nature of Genocide," Lemkin compared the treatment of the Moriscos<sup>32</sup> with the deportation marches of the Armenians. His conclusion was that "techniques of physical genocide have repeated themselves through history."<sup>33</sup> Attacks on the family unit constitute biological methods of genocide and Lemkin specifically cited the Ottoman Turkish Empire as another recurring theme in the history of genocide. As cited by John Docker, Lemkin stated: "The children can be taken away from a given group for the purpose of educating them within the framework of another human group, racial, religious, national or ethnical."<sup>34</sup>

Shortly before the group of specialists assembled to draft the world's first legal definition of the crime of genocide, Lemkin wrote the following as part of his campaign for the crime to be codified and adopted into international law:

The United States rebuked the government of Czarist Russia as well as that of Rumania for the ghastly pogroms they instigated or tolerated. There was also diplomatic action on behalf of the Greeks and Armenians when they were being massacred by the Turks.<sup>35</sup>

While the United Nations' committee was in the middle of its deliberations, Lemkin sent a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, which stated, in part:

The case of the Armenians, the case of the Christians under Turkish rule in the Balkans, pogroms of Jews under Czarist Russia ... These were not isolated cases of acts of violence multiplied by hundreds of thousands of victims, but collective crimes based upon a specific criminal intent to wipe out entirely or partially a human group.<sup>36</sup>



This and other public statements by Lemkin and others were part of a public relations campaign aimed at pressuring member-states to adopt the Convention. A motion proposed by Cuba, India and Panama that stated genocide was a crime against international law, and requested the United Nations' Economic and Social Council to prepare a draft convention, had been unanimously adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 96 (1) of 11 December 1946. Later, at the second session in 1947, a motion submitted by Cuba, Panama and Egypt had reaffirmed the original proposal. After two years of intensive work by a group of experts, the draft convention was ready.<sup>37</sup> At the 179<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting on the afternoon of Thursday 9 December 1948, the Panamanian delegate, Mr Alfaro, told the Assembly that "The convention on genocide was the result of the universal dislike of a crime which had been perpetrated throughout history". While he made reference to the genocidal crimes of World War Two, it was the Polish ambassador, Mr. Katz-Suchy, who explicitly referred to the Nazi regime and their crimes "on Poland." At the conclusion of the two-hour session, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide had been adopted.

As much as the Jewish genocide by the Nazis and their collaborators across occupied Europe, so the experiences of the Armenians, Assyrians, and Hellenes under Ottoman and Republican Turkish rule were in the minds of Raphael Lemkin and co-authors.<sup>38</sup> An argument therefore may be made that resolutions of national and regional legislatures constitute a ratification of existing recognition of the three genocides.

Why does formal reaffirmation by governmental and parliamentary bodies matter? Why is it necessary? There is an argument that those national jurisdictions that have signed the 1948 United Nations' Convention on the Prevention and Prosecution of the Crime of Genocide and/or adopted it into their national legal systems, have - *de facto* though not *de jure* - recognized the Genocides of the Armenians, Assyrians, and Hellenes. Of the 193 members of the United Nations in 2012, 142 have acceded to and/or ratified the 1948 Convention, including the 8 states this study focuses on.

In any event, a large and growing body of national and regional legislatures have adopted resolutions acknowledging that the experiences of the Armenians, Assyrians, and Hellenes of the Ottoman Empire and its successor state, the Republic of Turkey, constitute the crime of genocide.

**Table 1:** Trans-national recognition of the Armenian, Assyrian, and Hellenic Genocides

<b>Trans-national bodies</b>	<b>Date of recognition</b>	<b>Genocide(s) mentioned in the resolution</b>
Joint Declaration of the Allied Powers (France, Great Britain, and Russia)	24 May 1915	Armenian
Commission on the Responsibility of the Authors of the War and on the Enforcement of Penalties, Report Presented to the Preliminary Peace Conference	29 March 1919	Armenian
European Parliament	18 June 1987	Armenian
Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly	24 April 1998	Armenian
International Association of Genocide Scholars	5 October 2007	Armenian, Assyrian, and Hellenic
Pope Francis I	3 June 2013 10 April 2015	Armenian Armenian, Assyrian, and Hellenic
Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, Australia	3 May 2015	Armenian, Assyrian, and Hellenic
European Parliament	15 April 2015	Armenian
European Green Party	15 November 2015	Armenian, Assyrian, and Hellenic

**Table 2:** Countries which have recognised one or more of the genocides

<b>Country</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Genocide(s) mentioned in the resolution</b>
Senate Chamber of Deputies of <b>Argentina</b>	20 August 2003 18 March 2004	Armenian
Republic of <b>Armenia</b> National Assembly of the Republic	1988 23 March 2015	Armenian Assyrian and Hellenic
<b>Austrian</b> Parliament	22 April 2015	Armenian, Assyrian and Hellenic
Senate of the Kingdom of <b>Belgium</b> Federal Government of the Kingdom of <b>Belgium</b> Federal Parliament of the Kingdom of <b>Belgium</b>	26 March 1998 June 2015 23 July 2015	Armenian
The Plurinational Legislative Assembly and the Senate of <b>Bolivia</b>	26 November 2015	Armenian
Parliament of <b>Bulgaria</b>	24 April 2015	Armenian
Federal Senate of <b>Brazil</b>	29 May 2015	Armenian
House of Commons Senate of the Dominion of <b>Canada</b>	23 April 1996 13 June 2002	Armenian
Senate of the Republic of <b>Chile</b>	5 July 2007	Armenian
House of Representatives of the Republic of <b>Cyprus</b>	29 April 1982	Armenian
National Assembly of <b>France</b> Senate of France	28 May 1998 7 November 2000	Armenian
<i>Bundestag</i> of the Federal Republic of	16 June 2005	Armenian

<b>Germany</b> President Joachim Gauck	23 April 2015	
Parliament of the <b>Hellenes</b> (Greece)	8 March 1994  25 April 1996 13 October 1998	Hellenes of Pontos (Black Sea coast of Anatolia) Armenian Hellenes of Anatolia
Chamber of Deputies of the <b>Italian</b> Republic	16 November 2000	Armenian
Constituent Assembly of <b>Lithuania</b>	15 December 2005	Armenian
Chamber of Deputies of the Republic of <b>Lebanon</b> Parliament of the Republic of Lebanon	3 April 1997 11 May 2000	Armenian
Parliament of Grand Duchy of <b>Luxembourg</b>	6 May 2015	Armenian
House of Representatives and Senate of the <b>Netherlands</b>	21 December 2004	Armenian
Chamber of Senators of <b>Paraguay</b> (Statement N° 101/15)	29 October 2015	Armenian
National Assembly of the Republic of <b>Poland</b>	19 April 2005	Armenian
Federal Assembly of the <b>Russian</b> Federation	14 April 1995	Armenian
National Council of the Slovak Republic ( <b>Slovakia</b> )	30 November 2004	Armenian
Report of the Foreign Ministry <i>Riksdag</i> (Parliament) of the Kingdom of <b>Sweden</b>	29 March 2000 11 March 2010	Armenian, Assyrian, and Hellenic
National Council of the Helvetic Confederation ( <b>Switzerland</b> )	16 December 2003	Armenian
Senate and House of Representatives of the Republic of <b>Uruguay</b>	1965	Armenian
Communiqué of <b>Vatican City</b>	10 November 2000	Armenian
National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of <b>Venezuela</b>	14 July 2005	Armenian

Of the countries addressed in this study, Cyprus was first to officially recognise the Armenian Genocide, followed by the Hellenic Republic (Greece) in 1996, France (1998 and 2001), and Sweden in 2010. While the bicameral national parliaments of the United States and Australia have yet to adopt resolutions of recognition, substantial numbers of jurisdictions within both these federations have done so. Of the 50 members of the United States, 43 have passed recognition resolutions, as presented below. Of Australia's six states, New South Wales (1997, 2013 and 2014) and South Australia (2009) have officially recognized the Armenian, Hellenic and Assyrian genocides. Parliamentary debates and committees of the state of Israel and the United States have included discussions about recognition of the Armenian Genocide. To date, no resolution has been put to the Knesset nor has a resolution reached the floor of the Congress. From time to time, the issue is debated behind closed doors or speculated upon in the country's media but a formal resolution has yet to be presented for a formal vote.

Turkey officially flatly refuses to acknowledge the historical fact of the genocides, let alone entertain recognition of its own responsibilities, as perpetrator and as successor state to the primary perpetrator. Away from the corridors of power, however, there has been an increasing trend in the non-government sphere of exploring Turkish-Armenian relations during the genocide period (1914-1924).

There remains, however, deep resistance to such discussions within large parts of Turkish society, especially amongst its secular, Kemalist sections. This denial extends throughout the world, exercised through official representatives of the Turkish state as well as through Turkish community organisations aligned with Ankara. Indeed, a very little examined aspect of the controversies around governmental and parliamentary recognition of the genocides of the indigenous Armenian, Hellenic and Assyrian peoples of the Ottoman Empire is the unofficial Turkish perspective, the positions of the Turkish Diaspora that does not follow Ankara's stated line. As demonstrated in countries with large communities of Turkish migrants such as Germany and Australia, denial is far from the unanimous position of Turkish community organisations. Some Alevi-Alewite groups in Germany have even taken the step of apologising for their ancestors' roles in the genocides. Keynote speaker at the 21 April 2012 'Initiative for Remembrance of the 1915 Genocide' commemoration in Hamburg's St Petri Church was Cem Özdemir, National Chairman of the Green Party. Alongside him was Ali Ertam Toprak, Chairman of the Alevi Community in Germany and Secretary of the Alevi Communities in Europe, and a spokeswoman for the Turkish-Kurdish Initiative for Democratic Rights and Freedom.<sup>39</sup>

In Australia, in contrast, active, public denial is being promoted by Kemalist groups such as the Australian Turkic Alliance (ATA), the Australian Turkish Mutual Alliance (ATMA), and the Australian Atatürk Cultural Centre (*Avustralya Atatürk Kültür Merkezi*) (AAKM).<sup>40</sup> More "mainstream" Turkish community organisations – in particular, mosques – have been almost completely silent, particularly in the months since the parliament of New South Wales adopted its twin resolutions of recognition on 1 and 8 May 2013.

The influence of the form of government on legislative recognition of the Armenian, Assyrian, and Hellenic Genocides is another question that awaits further research. Are recognition resolutions more readily adopted by unicameral legislatures or by bicameral ones? By republics or by constitutional monarchies? As demonstrated by Table 2, the jurisdictions that have adopted resolutions of recognition cover a broad range of governmental systems, overwhelmingly democratic in nature but with numerous distinct features. While geopolitical concerns remain the dominant factor in legislatures adopting resolutions recognising the genocides of Anatolia's indigenous peoples, the influence the forms of government have in decisions to move and adopt such resolutions is an issue yet to be scrutinised.

**Table 3:** Jurisdictions within the United States of America to have adopted resolutions of recognition of the Armenian, Assyrian, and/or Hellenic Genocides

<b>Jurisdiction and form of recognition</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Genocides referred to in resolution/ proclamation</b>
United States' Senate Concurrent Resolution 12	9 February 1916	Armenian
United States' Congress Act to Incorporate Near East Relief	6 August 1919	Armenian, Assyrian, and Hellenic
United States' Senate Resolution 359	11 May 1920	Armenian
California – Assembly Concurrent Resolution	15 April 1968	Armenian
New Jersey - Assembly Resolution	1 April 1975	Armenian
United States' House of Representatives Joint Resolution 148	9 April 1975	Armenian
New Jersey - Proclamation by Governor	14 April 1975	Armenian
New York - House Resolution	24 April 1975	Armenian
New York - Senate Resolution	24 April 1975	Armenian
California – Assembly Joint Resolution	6 March 1979	Armenian
California – Assembly Concurrent Resolution	18 April 1980	Armenian
Colorado - Proclamation by Governor	23 April 1981	Armenian
California – Assembly Resolution	23 April 1981	Armenian
United States' House of Representatives-Senate Joint Resolution 247	12 September 1984	Armenian
Massachusetts – Commonwealth Proclamation	19 February 1986	Armenian
Michigan – Proclamation by Governor	13 March 1986	Armenian
Colorado - Proclamation by Governor	3 April 1986	Armenian
New York – House Resolution 776	4 April 1986	Armenian
New Jersey - Proclamation by Governor	7 April 1986	Armenian
California - Proclamation by Governor	8 April 1986	Armenian
New York – Senate Resolution 810	6 May 1986	Armenian
California – State Proclamation	2 April 1987	Armenian
Colorado - Proclamation by Governor	10 April 1987	Armenian
Maryland - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 1987	Armenian
New York - Proclamation by Governor	21 April 1987	Armenian
New York – Senate Resolution 927 and Assembly Resolution 753	5 May 1987	Armenian
Wisconsin – 1989 Senate Joint Resolution 71 - Enrolled Joint Resolution	30 January 1990	Armenian
California – Assembly Joint Resolution	13 March 1990	Armenian
Colorado - Proclamation by Governor	14 March 1990	Armenian
Illinois - House Resolution	14 March 1990	Armenian
Massachusetts - Proclamation by Governor	23 March 1990	Armenian
Oklahoma - Senate Concurrent Resolution 68	26 March 1990	Armenian
Michigan – House Concurrent Resolution 640	26 March 1990	Armenian
Michigan – Senate Concurrent Resolution 640	28 March 1990	Armenian
Oklahoma - House Concurrent Resolution 68	29 March 1990	Armenian
Illinois - House Resolution No. 1470	3 April 1990	Armenian
New Jersey - Assembly Resolution 113	5 April 1990	Armenian
Illinois - Senate Resolution 870	5 April 1990	Armenian
Michigan – Proclamation by Governor	16 April 1990	Armenian

Illinois - Proclamation by Governor	19 April 1990	Armenian
California - Proclamation by Governor	18 April 1990	Armenian
Alaska - Proclamation by Governor	19 April 1990	Armenian
Illinois - Proclamation by Governor	19 April 1990	Armenian
Pennsylvania - Proclamation by Governor	19 April 1990	Armenian
Massachusetts General Court Proclamation	19 April 1990	Armenian
Washington - Proclamation by Governor	20 April 1990	Armenian
Alaska - Senate Resolution	23 April 1990	Armenian
Arizona - Proclamation by Governor	23 April 1990	Armenian
Oregon - Proclamation by Governor	23 April 1990	Armenian
Connecticut - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 1990	Armenian
Maryland - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 1990	Armenian
New Hampshire - Senate Resolution 7	24 April 1990	Armenian
Virginia - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 1990	Armenian
Wisconsin - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 1990	Armenian
Florida - Proclamation by Governor	27 April 1990	Armenian
Rhode Island - Proclamation by Governor	29 June 1990	Armenian
California - Senate Resolution	11 April 1991	Armenian
California – Proclamation by Governor	16 April 1991	Armenian
California - House Resolution	1991	Armenian
New Jersey - House Resolution	1992	Armenian
Pennsylvania - House Resolution 301	18 April 1994	Armenian
California – Proclamation by Governor	22 April 1994	Armenian
California – Assembly Joint Resolution 84	25 April 1994	Armenian
Delaware - Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 19	11 April 1995	Armenian
Illinois – Proclamation by Governor	April 1995	Armenian
Pennsylvania - Senate Resolution	April 1995	Armenian
Wisconsin – Assembly Joint Resolution No. 31	3 April 1995	Armenian
Pennsylvania - House Resolution No. 107	18 April 1995	Armenian
Illinois - Senate Resolution No. 50	20 April 1995	Armenian
Illinois - House Resolution No. 37	21 April 1995	Armenian
Michigan - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 1995	Armenian
California – Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 19	4 May 1995	Armenian
Pennsylvania – House Resolution 325	26 March 1996	Armenian
California – Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 82	24 April 1996	Armenian
Virginia - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 1996	Armenian
United States House of Representatives Resolution 3540	11 June 1996	Armenian
Massachusetts - House Resolution 3629	1 January 1997	Armenian
California – Proclamation by Governor	2 April 1997	Armenian
California – Senate Resolution No. 51	24 April 1997	Armenian
Connecticut - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 1997	Armenian
California – Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 51	5 May 1997	Armenian
Illinois - House of Representatives Resolution No. 113	24 April 1997	Armenian
Pennsylvania - House Resolution 110	14 April 1997	Armenian
Rhode Island - House Resolution 6824	24 April 1997	Armenian

California – State Legislature	7 May 1997	Armenian
Pennsylvania – House Resolution No. 361	11 March 1998	Armenian
California – State Legislature	23 April 1998	Armenian
Virginia - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 1998	Armenian
Georgia - Senate Resolution No. 118	8 February 1999	Armenian
South Carolina - House Bill 3678	17 March 1999	Armenian
Illinois - Proclamation by Governor	23 March 1999	Armenian
Texas - SB 482 Creates Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission	7 April 1999	Armenian
Pennsylvania - House Resolution No. 94	12 April 1999	Armenian
Michigan – Senate Resolution No. 44	20 April 1999	Armenian
Michigan – House Resolution No. 74	22 April 1999	Armenian
North Carolina - Proclamation by Governor	23 April 1999	Armenian
New York - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 1999	Armenian
South Carolina – House Concurrent Resolution H. 3678	24 April 1999	Armenian
Rhode Island – House Bill 6428	28 April 1999	Armenian
California – State Legislature	3 May 1999	Armenian
Virginia - House Joint Resolution 298	24 January 2000	Armenian
California – Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 62	3 February 2000	Armenian
Virginia - House Joint Resolution 298	9 March 2000	Armenian
Maine State Legislature - Proclamation	7 April 2000	Armenian
Nevada - Proclamation by Governor	11 April 2000	Armenian
Rhode Island - House Bill 8161	12 April 2000	Armenian
Rhode Island - Senate Bill 2916	13 April 2000	Armenian
New York - Proclamation by Governor	17 April 2000	Armenian
Pennsylvania – House Resolution No. 427	18 April 2000	Armenian
California – Proclamation by Governor	20 April 2000	Armenian
Illinois - Proclamation by Governor	27 April 2000	Armenian
Wisconsin – Assembly Resolution 42	2 May 2000	Armenian
California – House (Senate) Concurrent Resolution No. 62	11 May 2000	Armenian
California – State Legislature	11 May 2000	Armenian
California – State Senate	20 September 2000	Armenian
New Mexico - Senate Joint Memorial 34	10 March 2001	Armenian
Minnesota - Proclamation by Governor	16 March 2001	Armenian
Maryland Senate Joint Resolution 5	26 March 2001	Armenian
Arkansas – Executive Department Proclamation	27 March 2001	Armenian
New York State – Proclamation by Governor	1 April 2001	Armenian, Assyrian, Hellenic
California - Proclamation by Governor	11 April 2001	Armenian
Michigan House Joint Resolution 58	19 April 2001	Armenian
New York - Proclamation by Governor	21 April 2001	Armenian
Connecticut - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 2001	Armenian
Rhode Island – House Bill 6344	24 April 2001	Armenian
Rhode Island – Senate Bill 917	24 April 2001	Armenian
Virginia – Governor Certificate of Recognition	24 April 2001	Armenian
Utah - Proclamation by Governor	April 2001	Armenian
Michigan House Resolution 4674	26 April 2001	Armenian

California – Senate Joint Resolution 5	30 April 2001	Armenian
Pennsylvania - House Concurrent Resolution No. 112	2 May 2001	Armenian
Maryland - House Joint Resolution 3	18 May 2001	Armenian
Maine - House Bill 1373	13 June 2001	Armenian
Wisconsin - Assembly Joint Resolution 72	22 January 2002	Armenian
Wisconsin - Senate Resolution 14 (LRB-4750/1)	20 February 2002	Armenian
New Jersey - Proclamation by Governor	1 April 2002	Armenian
New Jersey – House and Senate Joint Resolution	2002	Hellenes of Pontos (Black Sea coast)
Colorado – Senate Joint Resolution 22	11 April 2002	Armenian
New York – House Resolution J4589	19 April 2002	Armenian
New York - Proclamation by Governor	22 April 2002	Armenian
Rhode Island – House Bill 8056	24 April 2002	Armenian
Rhode Island – Senate Bill 2958	24 April 2002	Armenian
Virginia - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 2002	Armenian
California – Assembly Joint Resolution 44	26 April 2002	Armenian
Missouri - House Concurrent Resolution No. 4	8 May 2002	Armenian
New Jersey Senate and State Assembly Joint Resolution	2002	Hellenes of Pontos (Black Sea coast)
New York State - Proclamation by Governor	19 May 2002	Hellenes of Pontos (Black Sea coast)
New York Senate Resolution	22 May 2002	Hellenes of Anatolia
Michigan Enrolled Senate Bill 395	28 August 2002	Armenian
New York State – Proclamation by Governor	6 October 2002	Hellenes of Anatolia
South Carolina - Proclamation by Governor	8 December 2002	Hellenes of Pontos (Black Sea coast)
South Carolina - Senate Resolution	8 December 2002	Hellenes of Pontos (Black Sea coast)
Colorado - House Resolution	2003	
California – Proclamation by Governor	3 April 2003	Armenian
California – Senate Joint Resolution 1	10 April 2003	Armenian
New Mexico - House Resolution	2003	Armenian
New York - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 2003	Armenian
New Jersey - Proclamation by Governor	15 March 2004	Armenian
Pennsylvania - House Resolution 593	15 March 2004	Armenian
Colorado – House Resolution 1049	24 April 2004	Armenian
Colorado – House Joint Resolution 04-1050	16 April 2004	Armenian
Idaho - Proclamation by Governor	20 April 2004	Armenian
Louisiana - Proclamation by Governor	18 April 2004	Armenian
Montana - Proclamation by Governor	April 2004	Armenian
California - Proclamation by Governor	22 April 2004	Armenian
Nebraska - Proclamation by Governor	23 April 2004	Armenian
Tennessee - Proclamation by Governor	23 April 2004	Armenian
Idaho - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 2004	Armenian
New York - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 2004	Armenian
Pennsylvania - Proclamation by Governor	May 2004	Hellenes of Pontos (Black Sea coast)
Tennessee - Proclamation by Governor	2004	Armenian
Vermont - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 2004	Armenian



Illinois - Proclamation by Governor	11 March 2005	Armenian
Pennsylvania - House Resolution 172	28 March 2005	Armenian
Florida - House Resolution	19-20 April 2005	Hellenes of Pontos (Black Sea coast)
Florida - Senate Resolution	19-20 April 2005	Hellenes of Pontos (Black Sea coast)
Minnesota - Proclamation by Governor	20 April 2005	Armenian
New Hampshire - Proclamation by Governor	22 April 2005	Armenian
California - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 2005	Armenian
Colorado – Senate Joint Resolution 05- 022	24 April 2005	Armenian
New Jersey – Assembly Joint Resolution	5 May 2005	Armenian
Kansas - Proclamation by Governor	20 April 2005	Armenian
Florida - Proclamation by Governor	7 April 2006	Armenian
Colorado – Senate Joint Resolution 06-023	10 April 2006	Armenian
Massachusetts General Court Proclamation	13 April 2006	Armenian
Illinois - Proclamation by Governor	15 April 2006	Hellenes of Pontos (Black Sea coast)
New Jersey – Proclamation by Governor	18 April 2006	Armenian
California - Proclamation by Governor	21 April 2006	Armenian
New Mexico - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 2006	Armenian
New York - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 2006	Armenian
Texas – House Resolution	24 April 2006	Armenian
Massachusetts - Proclamation by Governor	9 May 2006	Hellenes of Pontos (Black Sea coast)
North Carolina - Municipal Resolution	2006	Armenian
Delaware – House Resolution No. 14	5 April 2007	Armenian
California - Proclamation by State Governor	6 April 2007	Armenian
Colorado – Senate Joint Resolution 07- 030	24 April 2007	Armenian
North Dakota - House Concurrent Resolution	3 January 2007	Armenian
Ohio - Proclamation by Governor	17 April 2007	Armenian
Rhode Island – Municipality of Cranston	2007	Armenian
New Jersey – Senate Resolution 115	21 June 2007	Armenian
Kentucky - Proclamation by Governor	2008	Armenian
New Hampshire – City of Manchester	20 May 2008	Armenian
California - Proclamation by Governor	7 April 2008	Armenian
Colorado – Senate Joint Resolution 08-024	24 April 2008	Armenian
Pennsylvania - Senate Resolution	17 December 2008	Armenian
California - Proclamation by Governor	19 April 2009	Armenian
Hawai'i - House Resolution No. 192 H.D.1	6 April 2009	Armenian
Massachusetts House Resolution 252	23 April 2009	Armenian
New York - Proclamation by Governor	24 April 2009	Armenian
New Jersey Assembly Joint Resolution 12	29 December 2009	Armenian
Colorado – Proclamation by Governor	24 April 2010	Armenian
Colorado – Senate Joint Resolution 10- 038	24 April 2010	Armenian
Connecticut - Proclamation by Governor	25 April 2010	Armenian
California - Proclamation by Governor	28 April 2010	Armenian
Rhode Island State Senate Resolution, S2809	28 April 2010	Armenian
Rhode Island State Senate Resolution, S2815	28 April 2010	Hellenes of Pontos

		(Black Sea coast)
Colorado – Proclamation by Governor	21 April 2011	Armenian
Colorado – Senate Joint Resolution 11- 035	21 April 2011	Armenian
Georgia - Senate Resolution 542	22 April 2011	Armenian
California - Proclamation by Governor	19 April 2012	Armenian
Rhode Island State House Resolution H8077 and Senate Resolution, S2889	24 April 2012	Armenian
Florida Senate Resolution SR 1878	24 April 2013	Armenian
Rhode Island State House Resolution H6034 and Senate Resolution S0873	24 April 2013	Armenian
Rhode Island Senate Resolution S0874	24 April 2013	Hellenes of Pontos (Black Sea coast)
New Jersey Assembly Joint Resolution 42	12 January 2014	Armenian
Rhode Island House Resolution H8108	30 April 2014	Armenian
Rhode Island Senate Resolution S2942	1 May 2014	Armenian, Assyrian, Hellenes of Pontos (Black Sea coast)
California - Senate Joint Resolution No. 21	21 May 2014	Armenian, Assyrian, Hellenic
Georgia - Senate Resolution 361	24 February 2015	Armenian
South Dakota - House Concurrent Resolution 1009	25 February 2015	Armenian, Assyrian, Hellenic
Hawai'i Senate Concurrent Resolution	10 March 2015	Armenian
California – House Resolution 154	18 March 2015	Armenian, Assyrian, Hellenic
Georgia - House Resolution 904	31 March 2015	Armenian
Rhode Island House Resolution H6053	8 April 2015	Armenian
Wisconsin – Assembly Joint Resolution 23	8 April 2015	Armenian
Colorado – Senate Joint Resolution 15-027	9 April 2015	Armenian, Assyrian, Hellenic
Nevada - House of Representatives and Senate Joint Resolution	14 April 2015	Armenian
Pennsylvania - House Resolution 265	20 April 2015	Armenian
Alaska – Proclamation by Governor	21 April 2015	Armenian
Pennsylvania - Senate Resolution 89	21 April 2015	Armenian
Connecticut - Senate Concurrent Resolution 15	22 April 2015	Armenian, Assyrian, Hellenic
Michigan Senate Resolution 40	23 April 2015	Armenian
New Jersey Joint State Resolution	24 April 2015	Armenian
New York State House and Senate Resolution J1399	24 April 2015	Armenian, Assyrian, Hellenic
Louisiana House Resolution 88	18 May 2015	Armenian
Rhode Island State Senate Resolution S0834	8 June 2015	Armenian

The above lists (Tables 1 and 2) record 290 unique legislative resolutions and proclamations recognising one or more of the genocides of the indigenous people of Anatolia by 27 national jurisdictions, eight transnational ones, and many sub-national jurisdictions. Some have reiterated these initial recognitions at later times, in resolutions and proclamations not recorded here.

## Why is official recognition so important?

Do such resolutions legitimise people's grievances? When history is validated by historians, by scholars, by survivors, and by the media, why is acknowledgement by elected officials deemed so important? The response is arguably best summarised by *Shoah* survivor and 1986 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Elie Wiesel:

For the survivor who chooses to testify, it is clear: his duty is to bear witness for the dead and for the living. He has no right to deprive future generations of a past that belongs to our collective memory. To forget would be not only dangerous but offensive; to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time.<sup>41</sup>

Resolutions and proclamations by elected officials are viewed by both supporters and denialists as validations of the historicity of the genocides. Scholarly opinion is virtually unanimous that the experiences of the indigenous peoples of Anatolia constitute genocide, according to the legal definition of this crime. Those who deny this constitute a tiny minority funded by the Turkish state. Both groups understand international and domestic public opinion is greatly influenced by declarations by legislative bodies and individuals in elected office. Therefore, in a significant way, resolutions and proclamations by legislators and legislative bodies contribute to the historiography of the genocides of the Armenians, Assyrians, and Hellenes.

Speeches and resolutions in parliaments of all sizes and jurisdictions draw on the research and publications of established scholars both for their inspiration and their content. These are seen by supporters as a validation of their own positions and simultaneously, as a denouncement of the denialist position. The last 18 months have seen an unprecedented number of speeches by Australian parliamentarians in support of recognition of the Genocides of the Armenians, Assyrians and Hellenes by the federal (national), state and territory (regional) legislatures. Beyond the political impact such individual and collective statements have, they simultaneously reflect and influence trend in the recording of local and national history. 2014 marks two significant anniversaries in Australian history: the centenary of the Allied campaign to capture the Gallipoli Peninsula from the Ottoman Turkish Empire and the centenary of the commencement of the Genocide of the Armenians.

The inter-relationship of these two events, marked on 25 April and 24 April respectively, have been a major part of the recent parliamentary addresses. For example, in his address in support of his own motion of recognition, Rev. Fred Nile MLC stated:

Anzacs from New South Wales were eyewitnesses to the genocides. Anzacs rescued survivors of the massacres and deportations across the Ottoman Empire between 1915 and 1918. People of our great State donated generously to save the lives of those who had reached sanctuary in Greece, French Syria, British Iraq and British Palestine. The stories of the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek genocides are a part

of the Australian story and they deserve their rightful place in that narrative.<sup>42</sup>

Clearly drawing on current scholarship, parliamentarians provide a unique forum for research related to the genocides. Their elected offices also provide the research they cite an added legitimacy that brings the scholarship to the attention of more prominent commentators. An example is Peter Fitzsimmons' *Gallipoli* (2014). A popular history designed for the non-specialist reader, Fitzsimmons incorporates the fates of Talaat Pasha and Soghomon Tehlirian into the book's "Epilogue."<sup>43</sup> Thus does a former rugby union player and current journalist link the genocide of the Armenians with the story of Anzac. Such linkages are virtually absent from the historiography of the 1940s to the 1990s related to Anzac and the three genocides in Anatolia.

As demonstrated by the ferocity with which Ankara responded to proposed resolutions in France, Sweden, and Australia – to name but three recent examples – the official Turkish position is that any parliamentary discussion of the genocides is a threat to Turkish national interests to be combatted with every means necessary. Within its borders, the Turkish state used Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code as a blunt instrument to silence discussion around the genocides. Until its amendment in April 2008, Article 301 criminalized insulting "Turkishness." Under the AKP government's amendments, "Turkishness" was replaced by the "Turkish nation", and the term "Republic" with "State of the Republic of Turkey." Despite numerous threats of lawsuits by Kemalist and related extreme groups, there has been an increasing tolerance of debate on the genocides of Anatolia's indigenous peoples in recent years.

## **Conclusions**

Four main conclusions may be drawn from an examination of debates around governmental and parliamentary recognition of the genocides of the indigenous Armenian, Hellenic, and Assyrian populations of Anatolia and neighbouring regions.

The first is that parliamentary recognition is an acknowledgement of the past and a validation of the future. Parliamentary resolutions of recognition and commemoration contribute substantially to the development of collective memory. They have major effects on our understanding of our own past, how we explain our past to ourselves, how we regard ourselves, and how we act as a national collective. Just as much as pieces of legislation, statements on the past by elected representative bodies shape the future direction of their societies. In a sense, motions of recognition of the genocides of the indigenous Armenian, Hellenic, and Assyrian populations of Anatolia and neighbouring regions validate Assyrian efforts for an autonomous region within the Iraqi state, as well as the existence of the Armenian and Hellenic Republics.

This has been amply illustrated by recent controversies over memorials to genocide perpetrators and victims in Sydney, New South Wales, and Los Angeles, California. At the urging of the Australian Turkish Advocacy Alliance, Multicultural

New South Wales (formerly the Community Relations Commission, the state's peak multicultural affairs agency) had been examining the adoption of *Guidelines on the Recognition of Historical Events*. Without ministerial approval, the agency chief executive officer, Turkish-born career bureaucrat Hakan Harman apparently approved the release of the *Guidelines*, which includes advice to "ensure that the decision does not contribute to the victimisation of any individual, cultural, religious, or linguistic group" and "consider whether the decision is consistent with Australia's foreign policy decisions, as determined by the Commonwealth Government." The release has caused uproar amongst a number of community groups, not least Australian Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks, who see these "Guidelines" as direct assaults on their efforts to secure parliamentary recognition as official acknowledgement of the past.<sup>44</sup> Memorials, commemorations and education unite to form a strategy designed to advance the notion of civilisation, shaping how current and future generations view the past, the present and the future. Physical and metaphysical memorials such as parliamentary motions of recognition are critical components of this strategy, critical to both advocates and opponents.

Equally important to official parliamentary recognition is the concept of the "unity of victimhood" is driven by the Armenian and Hellenic Diasporas, over the prioritisation of other "national issues" for the national governments of the Hellenic Republic and the Republics of Armenia and Cyprus. Lacking a nation-state, the Assyrian Diaspora has been overtaken by the fight for survival of the remaining Assyrians in their ancestral homeland. In particular since the overthrow of the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad and the commencement of the Syrian Civil War, the very existence of the indigenous Assyrian people of Iraq and north-eastern Syria – Bet-Nahrain, Mesopotamia, Land between the Rivers – has been threatened. The campaigns of the self-described "Islamic State" against Christians, Yazidis and non-Sunni Muslims amount to genocide. Meeting these threats to the Assyrian presence in their homeland has, quite naturally, overtaken parliamentary recognition as a priority for the Assyrian people at home and in the diaspora.

A third benefit of parliamentary recognition of the Genocides is that denial is a form of hate speech, forming the final stage of genocide. Once the physical killing is ended, the perpetrators seek to complete the mission of destruction by erasing even the memory of the victims. Denial thus constitutes vilification, as it attacks the memory of the survivors and their descendants. By an individual, a group or a state denying the experiences of the Armenians, Assyrians and Hellenes constitute genocide, they are in fact challenging the recollections of survivors and the interpretations of their descendants. Essentially, survivors and others who insist on their experiences constituting genocide are labelled liars and perjurers. Under any legal system in the world, this could be grounds for defamation lawsuits. Denial therefore is a form of vilification.

Section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act (Commonwealth of Australia 1975) defines vilification as public offensive behaviour because of race, colour or national or ethnic origin reasonably likely, in all the circumstances, to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or a group of people.<sup>45</sup> Paragraph 1, Article 2 of Law No. 4285/2014 of the Parliament of the Hellenes (adopted into law on 10

September 2014) states that whoever deliberately, publically, verbally or in print, via the world wide web or any other means or method, provokes, insults or with ill-intent denies the existence or the severity of crimes of genocide, crimes of war, crimes against humanity, the Holocaust and the crimes of Nazism which have been recognised by decisions of international courts or the Parliament of the Hellenes. Hate crimes and denial of genocide are governed by the European Union Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on Combating Certain Forms and Expressions of Racism and Xenophobia by Means of Criminal Law (2008 O.J. (L 328) 55.)<sup>46</sup>

*Shoah* survivor and humanitarian activist Elie Wiesel has repeatedly denounced denial. Most notably in his autobiography *Night*, he wrote: “To forget would be not only dangerous but offensive; to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time”. In an open letter issued by his Foundation for Humanity in 2007, Wiesel made it clear he was addressing Turkish denial just as much as denial of the *Shoah*.<sup>47</sup> With the original perpetrators long since deceased, the main justice left for survivors and their descendants is recognition of the crimes committed against them. According to Greg Stanton, “It is as essential to healing as closing an open wound. Without such healing, scars harden into hatred that cripples the victim and cries out for revenge.”<sup>48</sup>

Finally, we must insist that victims and their descendants have the right to contribute to the public memory, through memorials to their personal experiences. For example, as noted by the Local Government Association of NSW in its resolution of recognition in 2002. Beyond *de facto* grave markers for victims who have no known graves, these structures “assist the Assyrian nation strengthen their cultural identity and raise international awareness of the tragedy associated with genocide.”<sup>49</sup> In 2009, the Assyrian Universal Alliance – Australia Chapter sought permission from the local government body – the City of Fairfield – to erect Australia’s first monument to the Genocide of the Assyrians. In its official proposal, the AUA requested “that this ethnic, religious and cultural genocide of their people be acknowledged and recognized” through the creation of this monument. In providing approval, the city council cited international examples of similar monuments: “The governments of have all allowed Assyrians to establish monuments commemorating the victims of the Assyrian genocide”.<sup>50</sup>

While considered controversial by some, recognition of the genocides of the Armenians, Assyrians and Hellenes by elected representative bodies (international, transnational, national and regional parliaments, and local government bodies) constitute significant acknowledgements of the past, shaping and validating future development.

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<sup>1</sup> I am using Hellenic rather than *Greek* to provide an understanding to the reader that Hellenic populations live beyond the narrow borders of the modern Greek state.

<sup>2</sup> (Editorial) *New York Times* (26 August 1946), page 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Hellas* is short for the Hellenic Republic, the official name of the modern Greek state, but in this essay Greece is used to indicate the nation state as it is more common usage.

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- <sup>4</sup> Burak Bekdil, "Turkey makes splash in Mediterranean with naval acquisition," *Al-Monitor* (8 January 2014) <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/01/turkey-buys-landing-platform-dock.html#> (accessed 6 August 2014).
- <sup>5</sup> Kemal Kirisci and Sinan Ekim, "From Turkey to Tel Aviv: Trade Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs* (6 May 2015) <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2015-05-06/turkey-tel-aviv> (accessed 1 June 2015).
- <sup>6</sup> Caroline B. Glick, "Column one: Why Turkey is gone for good," *The Jerusalem Post* (13 February 2014); Palmer September 2011 *Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Inquiry on the 31 May 2010 Flotilla Incident*.
- <sup>7</sup> Michael Tanchum, "'Turkey's new carrier alters eastern Mediterranean energy and security calculus," *The Jerusalem Post* 2 April 2014 <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/Turkeys-new-carrier-alters-eastern-Mediterranean-energy-and-security-calculus-340352> (accessed 6 August 2014).
- <sup>8</sup> Agence France-Presse, "Israel debates recognizing Armenian genocide," *The National Post* (Canada) 27 December 2011 <http://news.nationalpost.com/2011/12/27/israel-debates-recognizing-armenian-genocide/> (accessed -- 28 December 2014).
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Tamar Pileggi, "Rivlin backtracks on Armenian genocide recognition," *The Times of Israel* (5 December 2014) <http://www.timesofisrael.com/rivlin-backtracks-on-armenian-genocide-recognition/#ixzz3NHTWAuxt> (accessed -- 28 December 2014).
- <sup>11</sup> JTA, "U.S. Jewish Umbrella Group Recognizes Armenian Genocide," *Ha'aretz* <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/news/1.681819>.
- <sup>12</sup> "Israel Won't Recognize Armenian Genocide, Says Ambassador," *Ha'aretz* <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.636058>; Yossi Sarid, "Israel Is Among the Holocaust Deniers," *Ha'aretz* <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-is-among-the-holocaust-deniers-1.154428> (accessed -- 4 December 2015).
- <sup>13</sup> Anti-Defamation League, "ADL Statement on the Armenian Genocide," [http://archive.adl.org/presrele/mise\\_00/5114\\_00.html#.VQTnkuF2HhU](http://archive.adl.org/presrele/mise_00/5114_00.html#.VQTnkuF2HhU) (accessed -- 15 March 2015); Mark Arax, "'Suddenly, the Israel lobby discovers a genocide," *Salon* (16 June 2010) [http://www.salon.com/2010/06/16/israel\\_lobby\\_genocide\\_armenia/](http://www.salon.com/2010/06/16/israel_lobby_genocide_armenia/) (accessed -- 15 March 2015); Tal Buenos, "Op-Ed Contributors: Abraham Foxman's good name," <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/Abraham-Foxmans-good-name-352643> *The Jerusalem Post* (15 May 2014), (accessed -- 15 March 2015).
- <sup>14</sup> Yaakov Lappin, "ADL recognizes Armenian genocide," *YNET* (21 August 2007). <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3440382,00.html> (accessed -- 4 January 2015).
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Peter Stanley, "'Australia's misplaced friendship with Turkey," *Eureka Street* Volume 23 Number 17 (25 August 2013), <http://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aeid=37100> (accessed -- 5 August 2014).
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