

Hellenic Electronic Center

with 35,000 Hellenes and 25 Hellenic Organizations as Associated members in the US and abroad

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The April 13 editorial regarding the United Nations' cancellation of the planned Genocide exhibit rightly criticizes the entity for succumbing to Turkish pressure. While recognizing the Armenian Genocide, the editorial failed to note that Genocides were also perpetrated against the crumbling Ottoman Empire's Greek and Assyrian populations. As early as 1914, Greeks living on the coasts of Asia Minor were summarily deported to the interior, and eventually, Greeks along with Assyrians fell victim to forced death marches, massacres, and starvation.

The horrific atrocities of the Ottoman Empire were acknowledged by external efforts to free the Empire's Christian subjects. Plans were conceived for the establishment of an independent Armenian Republic, while Greece was officially invited by the Great Powers to take possession of Smyrna and Eastern Thrace. In addition, Constantinople was occupied by the Great Powers, thus putting an end to Ottoman rule. Taken together, the 1922 sacking and torching of the Greek City of Smyrna and the ensuing massacre of its Greek and Armenian populations by Turkish nationalists led by Mustafa Kemal, as well as the subsequent slaughter of Greeks and Armenians throughout Anatolia evince the Turkish Kemalists' brutality and the programmed Genocide, intended to eliminate for perpetuity the native Christian populations whose democratic demands emanating from their simple desire to exist conflicted with Turkish demands to acquire territory inhabited by non-Muslim populations.

The subsequent "Exchange of populations" imposed by the Great Powers, led to the forcible uprooting and destruction of 1,000,000 Greeks from their ancestral homeland of 3,000 years. Indeed, Genocide is the proper label for the policies toward Greeks and Assyrians, as well as Armenians. Capitulation by the Great Powers to the Turkish Kemalists exposes the consequences of appeasement by the West -- the condemnation of entire peoples to unspeakable terror and suffering. The legacy of the official disregard of the suffering of innocents persists in America and Europe to the present. Turkish ultranationalists maintain a firm hold on Turkey, and neighboring states unable to defend themselves such as Syria and Cyprus have fallen prey to Mustafa Kemal's expansionist legacy which now appears to threaten the democratic ambitions of the Kurds in Northern Iraq who are being targeted by the Turkish paramilitary State.

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IN RESPONSE TO

ABETTING TURKISH DENIAL AT THE UNITED NATIONS
International Herald Tribune, France
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More than 90 years ago, when Turkey was still part of the Ottoman Empire, Turkish nationalists launched an extermination campaign there that killed 1.5 million Armenians.

It was the 20th century's first genocide. The world noticed, but did nothing, setting an example that surely emboldened such later practitioners as Hitler, the Hutu leaders of Rwanda in 1994 and today's Sudanese president, Omar Hassan al-Bashir.

Turkey has long tried to deny the Armenian genocide. Even in the modern-day Turkish republic, which was not a party to the killings, using the word genocide in reference to these events is prosecuted as a serious crime.

Which makes it all the more disgraceful that United Nations officials are bowing to Turkey's demands and blocking this week's scheduled opening of an exhibit at UN headquarters commemorating the 13th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide - because it mentions the mass murder of the Armenians.

Ankara was offended by a sentence that explained how genocide came to be recognized as a crime under international law: "Following World War I, during which one million Armenians were murdered in Turkey, Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin urged the League of Nations to recognize

crimes of barbarity as international crimes." The exhibit's organizer, a British-based anti-genocide group, was willing to omit the words "in Turkey." But that was not enough for the UN's craven new leadership, and the exhibit has been indefinitely postponed.

It's odd that Turkey's leaders have not figured out by now that every time they try to censor discussion of the Armenian genocide, they only bring wider attention to the subject and link today's democratic Turkey with the now distant crime. As for Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and his inexperienced new leadership team, they have once again shown how much they have to learn if they are to honorably and effectively serve the United Nations, which is supposed to be the embodiment of international law and a leading voice against genocide.