



Armenian National Committee of America
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

To: Foreign Affairs LA
From: Kate Nahapetian, Government Affairs Director
Date: October 13, 2005

Re: **U.S. Helsinki Commission calls on Turks to “face their history”**

I thought you might be interested in the recent release from the Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe blasting Turkey for its criminal prosecution of a Turkish writer and urging Turkey to face its history on the Armenian Genocide. Commission Co-Chairman Chris Smith noted today that:

“A stable democracy cannot blossom until the [Turkish] government ends the practice of stifling free speech and removes the clouds of deception and censorship from a true telling of history.”

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 775-1918 with any questions on the Armenian Genocide legislation which was recently overwhelmingly approved by the House International Relations Committee and now awaits action by the House leadership. Thank you.

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Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

UNITED STATES HELSINKI COMMISSION

An independent agency of the United States Government charged with monitoring and encouraging compliance with the Helsinki Final Act and other commitments of the 55 countries participating in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Press Releases & Articles
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234 Ford House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-6460
Senator Sam Brownback, Chairman
Rep. Christopher H. Smith, Co-Chairman
For Immediate Release

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HELSINKI COMMISSIONERS BLAST TURKEY ON PROSECUTION OF NOTED WRITER, CALL ON TURKS TO “FACE THEIR HISTORY”

(Washington) - Commissioners of the U.S. Helsinki Commission this week sent a letter to Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan, calling on him to authorize the removal of charges on noted writer, Orhan Pamuk, who was recently indicted for speaking openly on the Armenian question and charged with “public denigration of the Turkish identity.”

“Turkey has come a long way in terms of human rights, but the Pamuk case and the ongoing controversy over the treatment of Armenians during World War I leave a cloud hanging over Turkish democracy,” said Commission Chairman Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS).

The U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the U.S. Helsinki Commission, is a U.S. Government agency that monitors progress in the implementation of the 1975 Helsinki Accords. The Commission consists of nine members from the United States Senate, nine from the House of Representatives, and one each from the Departments of State, Defense and Commerce.

“Clearing Mr. Pamuk would be a strong demonstration that Turkey is abiding by its human rights commitments under the Helsinki Final Act. A stable democracy cannot blossom until the government ends the practice of stifling free speech and removes the clouds of deception and censorship from a true telling of history,” added Commission Co-Chairman Rep. Christopher Smith (R-NJ).

During World War I, one and a half million Armenians were subject to mass deportations and massacred by the Ottoman regime. Historians have called it the first great genocide of the 20th century and the issue remains extremely controversial in Turkey, where open discussion of the topic can still lead to criminal prosecution. A conference on the topic was recently held at Bilgi University in Istanbul, but has been bitterly denounced by Turkish officials who failed to block it.

“Turkey has barely taken the first steps toward coming to terms with its history,” added Smith. “Until the Turks honestly and openly discuss their history, their democracy will never be on a firm foundation.”

Orhan Pamuk, a noted Turkish writer, was charged for speaking out on the Armenian massacre and for other comments he made in the Swiss press. He is scheduled to be tried in December and faces a maximum sentence of three years. His release has become a major concern of human rights groups, particularly those focused on freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

“Dropping the charges against Orhan Pamuk is not sufficient for Turkey to come to grips with its past, but it is necessary,” commented Brownback. “If nothing else, the prosecution of Pamuk feeds the worst fears of those who are skeptical about Turkey’s commitment to freedom and democracy.”

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