



GENOCIDE WATCH

THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO END GENOCIDE

19 April 2010

Sir Nicholas Serota, Director, The Tate Gallery
Mr. Matthew Gale, Curator, The Tate Gallery

Dear Sir Nicholas Serota and Mr. Gale,

It has come to my attention that the Tate Gallery has responded to massive pressure from the Turkish denialist lobby and has posted a disclaimer about the use of the term "genocide" in the materials accompanying the Tate's excellent Arshile Gorky exhibit.

As the immediate past President of the International Association of Genocide Scholars (the major body of genocide scholars in the world), founding President of Genocide Watch, and Professor of Genocide Studies and Prevention at George Mason University, I must request that the disclaimer be immediately removed from the exhibit. It contains statements that are untrue. It is beneath the dignity of the Tate Gallery to succumb to the pressure of genocide deniers for any reason.

The term genocide is not only "emotive," as you have noted, but more importantly, it is a scholarly and legal term and it applies fully to the Turkish mass killing of the Armenians. Britain's own internationally respected Queen's Council, Sir Geoffrey Robinson stated in a report of October 2009 that from an international legal perspective, "the treatment of the Armenians in 1915 answers to the description of genocide."

Contrary to the statement in your disclaimer, the British government has never stated that it has "found no pre-meditation and that, therefore, the wartime events of 1915 do not constitute a 'genocide' in the legal definition." In fact the House of Lords in 1915, using evidence from a report written by Lord Bryce and the great historian Arnold Toynbee, accused the Ottoman Empire of "making government by massacre part of their political system," and of "systematically exterminating a whole race out of their domain."

British Foreign Ministers Arthur Balfour and Lord Curzon, and Prime Minister David Lloyd George were instrumental in creating the tribunals that convicted the Young Turk triumvirate -- Talaat, Enver, and Jemal -- of "massacres of hundreds of thousands of their own subjects" "which reduced the Armenian population "by well over a million." The trials of these "crimes against humanity," as the British government called them, proved the key charge of "pre-meditated mass murder." The triumvirate was convicted and sentenced to death. Their crimes precisely fit the modern definition of genocide. So the statement in your disclaimer that "the British Government has found no pre-meditation and that, therefore, the wartime events of 1915 do not constitute a 'genocide' in the legal definition" IS FALSE. The disclaimer must be removed from the exhibit.

GENOCIDE WATCH is the Chair of the International Campaign to End Genocide
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What strikes genocide scholars as most important to note is that the Polish legal scholar Raphael Lemkin coined the term genocide in large part on the basis of the Turkish mass killing of the Armenians in 1915. Lemkin's determination to get the United Nations to adopt the Genocide Convention was first shaped by the Armenian Genocide, as he notes in his own memoir, and then was realized after the Holocaust. Lemkin, who invented the term "genocide" was the first legal scholar to use the term Armenian Genocide. Every scholarly book on genocide has a section on the Armenian Genocide. The International Association of Genocide Scholars has repeatedly and unanimously passed resolutions affirming that the massacres of Armenians constituted "genocide."

I realize that the Tate Gallery has been put under pressure by the Turkish government to post its disclaimer, and I respect the difficulties this pressure presents for the Gallery. Nevertheless I suggest that if you must post a statement by the Gallery, that you revise your statement so it is in accord with the facts. Language such as the following might accomplish your purpose:

"While the British government for various reasons has never officially used the term genocide in its description of the mass killings of Armenians in 1915, it is important to note that Raphael Lemkin, the legal scholar who coined the term genocide did so in large part on the basis of the Ottoman government's extermination of the Armenians in 1915. The International Association of Genocide Scholars, the largest body of genocide scholars in the world, has repeatedly affirmed that the scholarly record and the legal and archival evidence prove that genocide is the accurate and necessary term to describe the mass killings of the Armenians. It is for these reasons that we have described the massacres as "widely held to be genocide."

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope to hear from you. I would be happy to discuss this issue with you. My phone number is 1-703-448-0222, and my e-mail address is genocidewatch@aol.com.

Sincerely,

GH Stanton

Professor Gregory Stanton
Immediate Past President, International Association of Genocide Scholars
Founding President, Genocide Watch
Professor of Genocide Studies and Prevention, George Mason University, USA

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