

Head of the Armenian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Mr. Davit Harutyunyan addressed a letter to Mr. Thorbjorn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe and Mr. Mevlut Cavusoglu, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The letter says:

„Dear colleagues,

Over the past two weeks the Prime Minister of Turkey has twice explicitly stated his intention to deport Armenians who allegedly reside in Turkey illegally. Immediately after the US Congress Foreign Affairs Committee passed a resolution specifying "the systematic and deliberate annihilation of 1,500,000 Armenians [in Ottoman Empire] as genocide" Recep Tayyip Erdogan told to BBC "We are turning a blind eye to the remaining 100,000 [Armenians, who are not citizens of Turkey].

Tomorrow, I may tell these 100,000 to go back to their country, if it becomes necessary". After the Swedish Parliament passed a decision recognizing the Genocide of Armenians in 1915, the Prime Minister of Turkey in his interview to "Spiegel" told: "We turn to Armenian Diaspora and those countries that support the diaspora: there are Armenians in Turkey who are Turkish citizens, and there are those who live in our country illegally. So far we have not considered the question of deportation, but if the diaspora continues to exert pressure [to recognize the Armenian Genocide in Ottoman Empire], we could imagine ourselves capable of doing that".

These statements raised a wave of criticism even in Turkey.

Nevertheless the Prime Minister of Turkey refused to apologise and to correct his mistake claiming only that he was misinterpreted and misunderstood. But later events clearly showed that the Prime Minister continues the same discriminatory approach. These statements raise serious concerns in that a person who bears the responsibility for the policy of the Republic of Turkey singles out a particular group of national origin in a context totally unrelated to any objective of addressing the issue of illegal migration. They imply application of Turkey's immigration laws and policies selectively and inconsistently, targeting a specific national group. Such irresponsible statements flagrantly violate every international treaty and convention in the field of racism and discrimination and require urgent attention and prompt reaction by the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly in particular. It is regrettable that up to now neither the Secretary General of the Council of Europe nor the President of the PACE reacted to such irresponsible statements, which violate the principles and values of the Organization.

Particularly, the Prime Minister of Turkey must be reminded without ambiguity that persecution against any identifiable group on racial, national, ethnic or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law constitutes serious violations of human rights and, in some cases, qualifies as crimes against humanity. It is particularly striking that such statements have been made by a high official representing a country of origin for millions of migrants, including illegal migrants in most parts of Europe.

Furthermore, the words uttered by the Prime Minister in his statements manifest negative

stereotyping of a particular group, namely migrants of Armenian origin, and abuse a situation of vulnerability in which these migrants find themselves.

The Council of Europe should, therefore issue a clear and unambiguous warning to the Government of Turkey about the nature and content of statements made by its Prime Minister and impermissibility of using this issue for making pressure on foreign countries by discriminatory application of migration policies towards a particular national group.

The Council should also remind strongly the Government of Turkey of its obligations and responsibilities under international human rights law to safeguard and protect migrants against illegal or violent acts.

It is noticeable that recognition and condemnation of the genocide by the international community is not only a tribute to the victims of the genocides, but also an important step towards prevention of the crime of genocide in the future. Yet, the statement of the Prime Minister of Turkey amounts to clear manifestation of hate speech and humiliation of a particular minority group, which may give rise to genocidal tendencies in Turkey. In this connection, it is important to consider what steps need to be taken to prevent development of such tendencies in Turkey as well as any manifestations of racism and discrimination in respect of any national or ethnic group.

It's worth drawing attention to the fact that to date Turkey has not ratified Protocol N12 to the ECHR, which provides for a general prohibition of discrimination and has not signed and ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National

Minorities, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Based on his visit to Turkey in 2009, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe initiated a dialogue on the human rights of minorities and subsequently published his report on this issue. The Commissioner focused on and provided recommendations on a number of major issues, namely, he recommended the creation and implementation of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, the ratification of Protocol N12 to ECHR and Turkey's accession to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

In its third Report on Turkey (adopted on 25 June 2004) the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) emphasized the need to reinforce respect for the rights of immigrants, irrespective of their legal status, asylum seekers and refugees.

ECRI also recommends that the Turkish authorities ratify Protocol N12 to the ECHR as soon as possible. It recommended to the Turkish authorities to: 1. make the declaration under Article 14 of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, empowering the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to receive individual communications;

2. consider withdrawing their reservations in respect of Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;

3. sign and ratify UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local

Level and the European Convention on Nationality,

4. sign and ratify Convention on Cybercrime and its Additional Protocol on the criminalization of acts of a racist or xenophobic nature committed through computer networks.

I believe that the Council of Europe should immediately take adequate steps to influence the Government of Turkey to abstain from public threats or actions of racist or discriminatory nature.“