



World Council of Churches

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10 June 2015

World Council of Churches

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Etchmiadzin, Armenia

8-13 June 2015

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During the centenary year of the Armenian genocide by the Ottoman Empire, the executive committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC) is meeting in this country on 8-13 June 2015, hosted by the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, to honour the martyrs and victims of the genocide. We visit the genocide memorial to remember them and to pray in the name of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. And we celebrate the life of the Armenian nation and the witness of the Armenian church.

The executive committee recalls the Minute on the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide adopted by the WCC 10th Assembly in 2013 in Busan. This important action by the 10th Assembly followed many other occasions on which the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) had called for recognition of the Armenian genocide by the United Nations (UN) and by member states, dating back to the 1979 session of the UN Human Rights Commission. The WCC has played a key role over many years in accompanying the Armenian church in speaking out and working for recognition of the genocide, and for appropriate responses to the genocide's continuing impacts on the Armenian people.

A minute adopted at the 6th Assembly of the WCC held in 1983 in Vancouver acknowledged that "The silence of the world community and deliberate efforts to deny even historical facts have been consistent sources of anguish and growing despair to the Armenian people, the Armenian churches and many others." While some continue their efforts to deny or minimize these historical events, the executive committee is greatly encouraged by His Holiness Pope Francis' public recognition on 12 April 2015 of the mass killing of an estimated 1.5 million Armenians as genocide. We stress that there is a duty on the international community to remember the victims of genocide, in order to heal these historical wounds and to guard against similar atrocities in the future.

The WCC, with its many member churches, has participated in several events marking the centenary, including the official commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide and canonization of the martyrs in Yerevan, Armenia, on 21-25 April. The WCC and its member churches will continue to participate in the ongoing centennial commemorations this year by the Armenian diaspora, including with the Armenian Church Holy See of Cilicia in Antelias, Lebanon, on 18-19 July. The Executive Committee thanks the many member churches and ecumenical partners around the world that have observed or will observe this ongoing centenary in their own contexts, and that have spoken in recognition of the genocide and in commemoration of its victims. Through these commemorations, we acknowledge that these tragic events occurred, and that they must be named by their right name.

The Armenian genocide was accompanied in the same historical and political context by genocidal acts against other – mostly Christian – communities of Aramean, Chaldean, Syrian, Assyrian and Greek descent, which have blighted history at the beginning of the 20th century.

Denial, impunity and the failure to remember such events encourage their repetition. Those who deny or attack the life and dignity of a sister or brother undermine and destroy the humanity of both the victim and themselves. These centennial commemorations should mark the passing of the time when governments remain reluctant to name what occurred one hundred years ago as genocide. We urge all governments to abandon this reluctance.

In this centenary year, we call the international community, the WCC's member churches and all people of faith and good will to remembrance, and to re-commit to the prevention of genocide and all crimes against humanity.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:11-12)



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