

## Turkey and Armenia urged to mend relations

Written by Sajjad Karim on 24 April 2015 in Opinion  
Opinion

The centenary of the Armenian genocide is 'a good opportunity' for Armenia and Turkey to resume talks for 'good neighbourly relations', says Sajjad Karim.



Friday 24 April 2015 marks the 100th anniversary of the tragic events today known as the Armenian genocide. Between 1915 and 1917, more than 1.5 million Armenian people lost their lives in a massacre perpetrated by the rulers of the Ottoman empire.

The European parliament recognised these mass killings in a resolution adopted in 1987 and last week reiterated this position by adopting a new text on the issue.

A few weeks before that, both the Euronest parliamentary assembly, of which I am a member, and the EU-Armenia parliamentary cooperation committee, which I co-chair, adopted their very own texts recognising the genocide and paid tribute to the memory of the victims.

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One may argue that this is only a historical fact and as such should have no repercussions on today's politics, but in this particular case there is a strong link between the history and what is happening today.

Relations between Armenia and Turkey are practically non-existent and the border between the two countries is closed. This is mainly linked to two issues; the unresolved conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh - a landlocked region in the south Caucasus between Armenia and Azerbaijan - and recognition of the genocide by Turkey, a step that Ankara consistently refuses to take.

Still, remembering the fact that this tragedy happened 100 years ago, the European parliament takes the view that the centenary would be a good opportunity for the normalisation of relations between the two states without any preconditions and the opening of the border - especially since relevant protocols to do so have already been negotiated, but never ratified.

Good neighbourly relations would not only benefit both countries, but also the region as a whole and may in turn lead to a breakthrough in another major problem in the area - the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Unfortunately, it seems that more time is needed for all of this to happen, but we can already see more open discussions within Turkey itself. For example, we are witnessing closer cooperation between civil society from both sides, who are all seeking truth and reconciliation.

Perhaps this people to people contact will result in action being taken at a state level and eventually lead to both sides being brought back to the negotiating table.

However, only time will tell whether the seemingly permanent soured relations between the two neighbouring states will be healed. In the meantime, it is right to urge both countries to take the appropriate steps towards normalisation and finally move on from the heartbreaking events which took place 100 years ago.

### About the author

Sajjad Karim (ECR, UK) is a co-chair of parliament's delegation to the EU-Armenia, EU-Azerbaijan and EU-Georgia parliamentary cooperation committees

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