



INFORMATION KIT

ARMENIAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF AUSTRALIA

The peak public affairs representative of the Armenian-Australian community

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE RECOGNITION FAQs

The following are frequently asked questions when considering recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Q: It was during World War I, when all sides suffered losses. Tragic deaths occurred on all sides during war but it was not genocide. Why recognise it as Genocide?

A: The victims of the Armenian Genocide cannot and should not be confused with civilians deaths during World War I. This is about the Ottoman Turkish leadership's decision and execution of the systematic extermination of an entire people within its population, based on their race. That is the very definition of genocide.



Q: Genocide as a legal term was coined in 1948 - 33 years after the Armenian Genocide. Therefore how can you recognise these deaths as genocide?

A: The scholar who coined the word "genocide", Dr. Raphael Lemkin, used the Armenian Genocide and the Jewish Holocaust as his sample cases in authoring the UN Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948; a Convention to which Australia is a signatory. Indeed, the Jewish Holocaust, rightly defined as a genocide, also occurred before the UN Genocide Convention was passed. There is no statute of limitations on genocide, and its perpetrator state should be held to account.



Q: This is a historical issue. Why would the Australian government debate a historical issue, which should be left to the historians to decide?

A: The overwhelming majority of Holocaust and genocide scholars have long established that the systematic extermination of the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire constituted the crime of genocide. There is no reasonable "historical debate" only attempts to obfuscate matters by certain "academics" with close links to the Turkish State or its denialist agents. The International Association of Genocide Scholars, which is the peak body of genocide scholars, is in one voice on the historical reality of the Armenian Genocide, and has sought to discredit the few historians who dispute the matter.



Q: Why would the government want to upset Turkish-Australians by creating a division between them and Armenian-Australians by recognising the Armenian Genocide?

A: The recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the Australian Parliament is not an "Armenian-Turkish" dispute. It is a critically important human rights issue and the dangerous message conveyed by

impunity in allowing such a heinous crime against humanity to remain unpunished and unatoned for. It also has a direct affect on the vast majority of Armenian-Australian who are descendants of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide who were scattered to the four corners of the world and have made Australia their home. Those arguing against Armenian Genocide recognition are primarily the Turkish state, through their embassies and consulates and their funded Australian “advocacy” groups such as the Australian Turkish Advocacy Alliance. Foreign governments, in particular a genocide denialist state with an appalling human rights track-record, should not be determining Australian policy on human rights matters. Armenian-Australians have no issues with Turkish-Australians, and this will always be the case.



Q: Why not let Armenia and Turkey resolve this matter between themselves? After all, they have signed the Turkey-Armenia Protocols?

A: Turkey has closed its borders with Armenia, and refuses establishing diplomatic relations without preconditions (including ceasing efforts for recognition of the Armenian Genocide) . The Protocols proved to be political posturing by Turkey, who never ratified the document it signed to stop international pressure building on the issue of the Armenian Genocide leading up to the Centenary in 2015. The Armenian Government recently annulled the Protocols after Turkey failed to meet a deadline to resume talks. The international community should not fall for such trickery and make an honest negotiator out of a Turkey that needs to face up to its history.



Q: What are 3 reasons the issue of Armenian Genocide relevant today?

A: First, a crime unpunished is a crime encouraged. The failure of the international community to honour their promises to bring the perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide to justice and to compel the successor state of Turkey to atone for its crime and provide restitution to the survivors, helped convince Adolf Hitler some 20 years later to carry out a similar policy of extermination against the Jews and certain other non-Aryan populations of Europe. Genocides continue to occur today.

Second, 1.5 million Armenian lives, the majority of the then-Armenian population have been seeking closure and justice for over a century. Scholars have identified the denial of genocide as the final step of genocide and not recognising this will be facilitating the continuation of the Armenian Genocide through its denial.

Third, Turkey continues to act as a state free of the burden of consequences for its actions. Its reaction to the recent coup, where it has jailed hundreds of thousands of citizens for possible collusion based on evidence as basic as social media posts insulting the president. Further, Turkey’s facilitation of ISIS’s entry into war-zones in the Middle East, its military mobilisation into neighbouring sovereign territories, and aggressive posturing to world powers, including the United States mean Turkey operates under the expectation of impunity.



Q: Why should Australia recognise the Armenian Genocide?

A: Australia's first major international humanitarian effort was to support the survivors of the Armenian Genocide. It established Armenian Relief Funds, Armenian Relief Committees and other relief organisations such as Australian Friends of Armenia and The Victorian Friends of Armenia were established in major capital cities and other cities of Australia from 1915 onwards to organise vital, Australia-wide, fundraising efforts for the orphans and other survivors of the genocide. Australia facilitated an orphanage for orphaned Armenians and sent critical supplies valued in what would be the equivalent of millions of dollars today.

ANZAC POWs, in Ottoman Turkey for the Gallipoli campaign (April 24, 1915 was the beginning of the Armenian Genocide and April 25, 1915 was the date of Gallipoli landings) were witness to the Armenian Genocide and wrote about what was happening to the Armenians in their journals.

The Australian press heavily covered the Armenian Genocide, reporting race-based mass exterminations and death marches.

This combined history, as well as the will of its Armenian-Australian, Greek-Australian and Assyrian-Australian (Greeks and Assyrians also suffered genocide as Christian minorities) constituents, is why Australia should recognise the Armenian Genocide.



Q: How will Turkey react if Australia recognises the Armenian Genocide?

Over 30 countries (including the United States, Canada, France, Germany), 2 Australian states (NSW and SA), 49 U.S. states, the Vatican and countless other legislative bodies have recognised the Armenian Genocide.

Turkey's threats prior to recognition are the same, and its actual reactions can be summarised as well-rehearsed diplomatic posturing with no lasting impact.

They threaten to stop diplomatic relations and act by recalling their ambassadors. E.G. They recalled their Ambassador to the U.S. during Armenian Genocide motion debate of 2007, they recalled their Ambassador to France when it recognised the Armenian Genocide in 2011, they recalled their Ambassador to the Vatican for the same reason in 2015, they recalled their Ambassador to Germany for the same reason in 2016, and most recently in 2018, they recalled their Ambassador to the Netherlands, which also recognised the Armenian Genocide.

In all cases, the Ambassadors were reinstated within a three-month period, while diplomatic channels remained open during the absentee period.

Turkey also makes certain unique threats depending on the country debating Armenian Genocide recognition. With the United States, it is threatening the closure of its key Incirlik Army Base, which Americans in media respond to by condemning such a dishonest partnership. With Australia, sources have confirmed that Turkey had threatened to “close Gallipoli for renovations” for the 1915 ANZAC Day Centenary Commemorations.

The reality is that Turkey needs these relationships as much, if not more than the countries it is threatening. This is evidenced by their failure to act on the many trade threats they have made against countries who have recognised the Armenian Genocide.

The following chart tracks the increase in bilateral trade between Turkey and other countries following their recognition of the Armenian Genocide:

Post-Armenian Genocide Recognition Bilateral Trade with Turkey		
	Armenian Genocide recognition	Trade with Turkey since recognition
Belgium	March 26, 1998	+174%
Canada	April 21, 2004	+148%
France	January 29, 2001	+257%
Greece	April 25, 1996	+399%
Italy	November 17, 2000	+126%
Lebanon *	May 11, 2000	+126%
Netherlands	December 21, 2004	+66%
Russia	April 14, 1995	+912%
Slovakia	November 30, 2004	+298%
Sweden	March 29, 2000	+33%
Switzerland	December 16, 2003	+6%
Uruguay *	March 26, 2004	+85%

* Calculated percentages are based on information up to 2010, while Lebanon and Uruguay are limited to 2005. Further statistics have not yet been released for the latter countries.

The data identifies an increase in trade between Armenian Genocide-recognising countries and Turkey following their recognition motions and resolutions.



Q: How important is it for Australia to be on the right side of history?

A: Australia played an instrumental role in the historic passage of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. It rightfully has an enviable reputation as a respected soft power on important human rights issues. It would not be befitting for Australia to be seen to now be appeasing genocide denial and the dangerous message that would be conveyed if impunity for such crimes against humanity was allowed to be continued.