



Conference of European Churches • Conférence des Églises Européennes • Konferenz Europäischer Kirchen • Конференция Европейских Церквей

## STATEMENT OF CEC ON THE OCCASION OF THE 90<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The Presidium of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) has issued the following Public Statement on the occasion of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian genocide:

"On 24 April 2005 the peoples of Armenia will commemorate the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Genocide under the Ottoman Empire. At the commemoration in Armenia, the Conference of European Churches (CEC) will be represented by its President, Revd Jean-Arnold de Clermont, President of the Federation of Protestant Churches in France.

The Presidium of the Conference of European Churches, meeting in Västerås (Sweden), 6-10 April 2005, subscribes to the words, which the Catholicos of All Armenians, Karekin II and Catholicos Aram I have repeatedly expressed: the horrific crimes in connection with the Armenian genocide should never be forgotten. Guilt must be admitted and the truth must be told. Reviewing one's own history opens the path to forgiveness, to healing bitter memories and to gaining a common future.

The CEC Presidium joins the World Council of Churches in inviting all its member churches 'to make April 24 a Day of Memory of the Armenian Genocide and to consider further appropriate actions related to the 90 years Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide'. Churches all over the European continent and beyond can play an important role in offering a platform for encounter and in supporting projects towards reconciliation.

The Presidium urges the Turkish government to initiate a process of reconciliation between the Turkish and the Armenian peoples, in which the recognition of guilt and the proclamation of the truth need to be integral elements. In this regard, the Conference of European Churches welcomes the announcement of Prime Minister Erdogan to open Turkish archives. It is important that Armenian and Turkish as well as independent researchers have full access to the documentation.

We also urge the Turkish government to establish the conditions which allow for a free and honest debate in public as well as in educational institutions about atrocities, deportations and massacres committed against the Armenian peoples.

Geneva  
(General Secretariat)  
P. O. Box 2100,  
150 route de Ferney,  
CH - 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland  
tel: +41 22 791 61 11  
fax: +41 22 791 62 27  
e-mail: [cec@cec-kek.org](mailto:cec@cec-kek.org)

Brussels  
Ecumenical Centre  
rue Joseph II, 174  
B - 1000 Brussels,  
Belgium  
tel: +32 2 230 17 32  
fax: +32 2 231 14 13  
e-mail: [csc@cec-kek.be](mailto:csc@cec-kek.be)

Strasbourg  
8, rue du Fossé des Treize  
F - 67000 Strasbourg,  
France  
tel: +33 3 88 15 27 60  
fax: +33 3 88 15 27 61  
e-mail: [csc@cec-kek.com](mailto:csc@cec-kek.com)

Atrocities on the territory of today's Turkey, however, were not only committed against the Armenian peoples, but also against other Christian and ethnic minorities.

On 1 October 2005, negotiations will begin between the European Union and Turkey with the aim of Turkey becoming a member state of the European Union. As already stated on 3 October 2004 by the Conference of European Churches, the Copenhagen criteria for accession must be fulfilled and the accession negotiations need to be accompanied by an honest elaboration of history, particularly that part of it which concerns the relationship of Turkey with its neighbouring states and which includes recognition of wounds and offences inflicted. This is a pre-condition to healing of memories and to true reconciliation in society, which has not yet been reached in Turkey. The relationship with the Armenian peoples as well as with other Christian and ethnic minorities is, in this respect, of special importance.

The Conference of European Churches will continue to monitor the negotiations between the European Union and the government of Turkey very closely. The EU is a community of States, which is built on human rights, democracy and the rule of law and in which values of justice and peace, solidarity and pluralism, reconciliation and tolerance, freedom of speech and mutual respect are declared by the documents the EU committed itself to; effort are underway to make them an integral part of everyday life. The commitment to implementing these values in Turkey, not at least with regard to its minorities and the relations to its neighbouring countries, will be a pre-condition for Turkey's accession to the European Union".

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