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CENTER FOR EURASIAN STUDIES

AVİM Commentary • No: 2011 / 27 •

CRISIS WITH FRANCE AND ARMENIAN DIASPORA ACTIVITIES IN THE LIGHT OF 2015

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French National Assemblys vote on Thursday of the law punishing the denial of the genocide is currently determining foreign policy agenda. Although deemed unlikely that the bill -now to be submitted to the Senate- would become a law before the elections, it could easily be assumed that this agenda is the result of political rivalries within the French political conundrum. Even if it arose from such internal political debate, it is still unclear that the bill would serve the purpose of increasing popular support for or the results anticipated by the UMP, Sarkozys Party. Studies reveal that voter partisanship is most prevalent in France, and is rarely changed by the pre-election campaigns. Other studies reveal that the political campaigns before the elections could have a politicizing effect on the electorate, but only to confirm, not to change the voter behavior during the elections. Thus Sarkozy and UMPs attempts to increase their support before the elections could be misleading. Even if this is the case, considering the number of French citizens of Armenian origin, namely maximum 450000, and the total French electorate, 44.4 million registered voters, and any support that would come from that particular group could be insignificant. Some commentators claim that UMP and Sarkozy tried in fact to steal votes from the Socialist Presidential candidate François Hollande, former first secretary of the Socialist Party. He recently seems to increase his efforts to strengthen links with the Dashnaks and other Armenian associations. Considering the constant support by the Armenians to the Socialist Party of France and the disappointment with Sarkozys failed promises, passing of the law from the National Assembly by an absurd number of votes is hardly surprising. Inspired by the crisis with the France, it is reasonable to assume that the foreign policy agenda in Turkey and all over the world are stuck with short term crises. A long term approach on foreign policy is underestimated, mainly due to short-term political gains. Even in the short-term, French politicians are now facing the serious sanctions by the Turkish government and even the French public is unhappy with the current condition. And in the long-term, it now becomes clear that the relation between both countries is hard to repair. Despite little direct involvement on their side, another Diaspora in a European country seems to gain a controversial success, and contribute □□□ always- to the crisis, not reconciliation. Therefore, attempts against Turkey in the international field by the Armenian Diaspora have begun drawing much more attention more than ever. Despite the lack of awareness in the Turkish public opinion, the problems

that would arise from the activities of the Armenian Diaspora in the near future could have more impact than any other temporary inter-state crisis. Thus, rather than only being a crisis between the two countries, this crisis once again displayed an example of the Armenian Diasporas anti-Turkey initiatives which it has intensified when 2015 is drawing near. To mention some of the intensified activities of the Armenian Diaspora and Armenia: 1. Upon Armenian President Serj Sarkisyans directive and approval, a State Commission for Coordination of the Commemoration Activities for the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide has been established in April 2011. In this commission, Armenian authorities as well as representatives from the Diaspora have been included. 2. The 3rd Western Armenians National Assembly, long existing on the agenda of the Armenians in Europe, has been held in the city of Sevres in France in December 2011. The first two assemblies were held in 1917 and 1919. With this Assembly, it has been decided that a National Council of Western Armenians would be organized internationally to represent Western Armenians and initiatives against Turkey would be hastened before 2015. The most significant of these initiatives is supporting the works to determine the collective losses and damages of the Western Armenians experienced in 1915 as defined by the 2012-2013 Action Plan of the Council and forming an organization entitled Armenian Forum of Lawyers and filing action for damages in national and international courts. 3. Similarly, action for damages has been continuing in the US filed in 2009 against the Republic of Turkey and the Central Bank and Ziraat Bank of Turkey. 4. It could also be observed that attempts to form historical and legal basis for file suits in the US and elsewhere and possibly in the future have seriously increased through the support of academic research regarding Armenian properties, known particularly as abandoned properties in Turkey and among international academic circles. 5. Within the area of international academics, works directed towards the recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations such as meetings, seminars, conferences, and publication of books and articles have gained momentum. Within this framework, an agreement has been reached between the Armenian Film Foundation and the Southern California University Shoah Foundation Institute in April 2010 for the publication of works to be prepared with the recordings of interviews conducted with approximately 400 witnesses of genocide. Currently, works towards publishing the records found in the Armenian Archives Administration has also begun. Similar attempts to use oral propaganda are under way. 6. A project for an Armenian Genocide Museum, first started by the Cafesjian Foundation in Washington in 2000, but only began to be fully implemented due to various legal disagreements is planned for opening before 2015. This short list comprises only a small portion of propaganda against Turkey performed by the Diaspora. As a matter of fact, Diasporas attempts towards the recognition of the genocide allegations in parliaments of foreign countries are still continuing. As the list shows, we are confronted with a much more serious crisis than a politically motivated French attempt against Turkey. Thus, new measures to counteract the Diaspora initiatives in the international arena which remained unanswered- are necessary and inevitable.

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To cite this article: ŞİR, Aslan Yavuz. 2026. "CRISIS WITH FRANCE AND ARMENIAN DIASPORA ACTIVITIES IN THE LIGHT OF 2015." Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM), Commentary No.2011 / 27. December 22. Accessed November 08, 2026. https://www.avim.org.tr/en/Yorum/CRISIS-WITH-FRANCE-AND-ARMENIAN-DIASPORA-ACTIVITIES-IN-THE-LIGHT-OF-2015

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