

OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES - 02.05.2021

Melek Sina BAYDUR

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OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. President,

I am the widow of Bahadır Demir, who served as the Deputy Consul General for the Republic of Turkey in Los Angeles. He was murdered by an Armenian American, Gourgen Yanikian, in Santa Barbara on January 27, 1973. Bahadır was killed in a double assassination alongside Consul General Mehmet Baydar. They were the first of four Turkish diplomats assassinated on American soil, including Consul General to Los Angeles Kemal Arıkan and Honorary Consul General to Boston Orhan Gündüz, in 1982.

Bahadır and I were newlyweds. He was 30 and I was 26. One morning I said goodbye to him and later I found his bullet ridden body on a cold stainless-steel table in the morgue.

The Superior Court of California for the County of Santa Barbara sentenced Yanikian to life. But later in 1984, former Governor of California, George Deukmejian, also an ethnic Armenian, set Yanikian free. Insult to injury followed and Yanikians body was sent to Armenia where he was given a heros state funeral. Other indignities for victims of Armenian terrorism on American soil have continued. This year, after a Los Angeles County judge decided to parole Hampig Sassounian, the assassin of Consul General Kemal Arıkan, Governor Gavin Newsom chose not to appeal the ruling. Moreover, it seems that

the United States Government chose not to try him on federal murder charge. Thus, another Armenian terrorist who kills a Turkish diplomat goes free.

And then came your April 24 statement, Mr. President. You broke the hearts of many more people than you think you pleased, by proclaiming the crime of genocide has been committed, utterly ignoring the complexities of history and the Ottoman Muslim lives lost in the same conflicts.

I am a graduate of the American College for Girls in Istanbul and had the pleasure to reside in the United States many years. But your statement contradicted everything I had learned about the American way -the guarantee of justice, fairness, due process, and equality for all. It is important to acknowledge both sides of a story, reserve judgement, and encourage reconciliation without accusation.

It is never too late for your office to advocate reconciliation based on truth. Please encourage full public access to the Archives of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation in the United States and Yerevan. Please reserve judgement in fairness to both communities, Turkish and Armenian. This is the foundation of friendly rapprochement.

If there is one thing Bahadır would have advocated had he not been silenced by Yanikians bullets, it would have been the pursuit of truth.

Sincerely,

Sina Baydur (Demir)*

Hon. Joe Biden

President of the United States of America

* *Melek Sina Baydur (Demir) graduated from Üsküdar American College (High School) and Istanbul Universitys Faculty of Economics. She assumed various roles at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. During her career at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, she served as the Ministrys Deputy Director General of Multilateral Cultural Affairs between the years 2001-2003, as Turkeys Ambassador to Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1 January 2003-16 December 2005, as the Ambassador to Slovenia between 1 January 2006-29 February 2008. In 2008, she was appointed as the Head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Education Center and served as the UNESCO Turkey National Commission Deputy Chairperson between 2010-2014.*

About the author:

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