PRESIDENT SARGSYAN'S RESPONSE TO THE INVITATION FOR THE COMMEMORATION CEREMONIES OF THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF GALLIPOLI

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21.01.2015

In response to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğans invitation for the commemoration ceremonies of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Gallipoli, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan issued a letter on the official website of the President of the Republic of Armenia. In his letter, President Sargsyan declined the invitation of President Erdoğan. This letter was widely circulated in the Armenian, Turkish and international press.

In this letter, President Sargsyans replicates the clichés of the widespread Armenian political discourse. He demands to pass on an authentic and genuine history to the next generations. However, his claims in this letter fail to honor his very own petition.

President Sargsyan refers to an artilleryman of Armenian descent, Captain Sargis Torosyan, who joined the troops of the Ottoman Empire in the Battle of Gallipoli. According to Sargsyan, Captain Torosyan was an officer, dedicated to the defense and security of the Empire, who was decorated with Ottoman military awards for his loyalty and heroism.

President Sargyan takes this story from the memoir of Torosyan first published in 1947 in the USA with the title *From Dardanelles to Palestine: A True Story of Five Battle Fronts of Turkey and Her Allies and a Harem Romance*. It is obvious that President Sargsyan refers to this memoir to render his response more impressive since this book was also published in Turkish in 2012.

It is also apparent that, President Sargsyan gave much and undue credit to the phrase A True Story in the title of this book without paying attention to the scholarly debates that this book initiated. Probably, he did not feel a need for that since Captain Torosyans story was serving his purpose.

President Sargsyan would be well-served to be reminded that the falsehood of Torosyans

true story has already been an established fact. Historians, who even at the first sight could see the contradictions in those truths conducted a research on the reliability of this memoir and eventually came to the consensus to dismiss it as a fabricated narrative. President Sargsyans hold on to a fabricated narrative demonstrates his interpretation of authentic and genuine history. His coloring of Torosyan provides us with insights about his understanding of patriotism and loyalty.

President Sargsyan in his response letter also writes:

> According to you, the Battle of Gallipoli offers a unique example for both Turkey and the World as an illustration of friendship born out of war, and the battlefield, reminding of the bitter heritage of war, stands as an eternal monument to peace and friendship.

He continues by bringing up the well-known meaning of the Battle of Gallipoli. Although, it is difficult to grasp what President Sargsyan implies with these words, given the possibility that President Sargsyan had not understand the meaning that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the people of Turkey attach to the Battle of Gallipoli, we would like to quote Mustafa Kemal Atatürks well-known message to the fallen Anzac soldiers at Gallipoli and their families.

> Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives…
>
> You are now living in the soil of a friendly country therefore rest in peace.
>
> There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us where they lie side by side here in this country of ours…
>
> You, the mothers, who sent their sons from faraway countries wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace.
>
> After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well.

President Sargsyan speaks of the questionable role of Turkey in World War I and World War II without clarifying what he means. The role of Turkey (Ottoman State, to be exact) in the World War I was exactly the same of the roles of the other states that involved in this war. What is questionable as regards to the World War I is indeed the role of the Armenian *fedayee*s (guerilla fighters) and Armenian soldiers in the Russian army fighting the Ottoman army in the eastern front.

Turkey did not take part and never saw combat in World War II. The role of Turkey in the World War II was nothing but an excellent diplomacy to protect its citizens from the evils of the war. Armenia would be well advised to draw lessons from this episode of the Turkish history.

President Sargsyan urges Turkey to have the courage to confront the past, on the historical justice, as well as on recognition of full-fledged universal memory but never on selective approach. We wish the same for President Sargsyan. We wish President Sargsyan could have the courage to rebuff the delusive numbers such as 1.5 million

asserted by historians-as-propagandists as regards to the Armenian causalities in the World War I. Besides, we wish President Sargsyan had knowledge of methodology of historical research, difference between history and memory, and reliable and valid documents and fabricated memoirs. We wish President Sargsyan had awareness of what scholars of social memory commonly accept; social memory is never universal but always subjective and framed as regards to the present-day context.

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To cite this article: AVİM, . 2026. "PRESIDENT SARGSYAN'S RESPONSE TO THE INVITATION FOR THE COMMEMORATION CEREMONIES OF THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF GALLIPOLI." Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM), Commentary No.2015 / 7. January 20. Accessed November 22, 2026. https://www.avim.org.tr/public/index.php/en/Yorum/PRESIDENT-SARGSYAN-S-RESPONSE-TO-THE-INVITATION-FOR-THE-COMMEMORATION-CEREMONIES-OF-THE-100TH-ANNIVERSARY-OF-THE-BATTLE-OF-GALLIPOLI

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