WORKSHOP ON ARMENIAN TURKISH SCHOLARSHIP: POLITICS AND GRATUITY AT WORK AGAIN

AVİM

The latest Workshop on Armenian Turkish Scholarship (WATS) is scheduled to be held between the dates 15-18 September, 2017 in Germany. The hosts are the European Academy Berlin and Lepsiushaus Potsdam. Among other supporters of the event are the University of Michigan, Sabancı University and the University of Southern California's Institute of Armenian Studies.

WATS was founded at the University of Michigan in 2000 as the first forum where Turkish, Armenian and other historians could conduct an informed debate relating to the controversy surrounding the relocation of Ottoman Armenians during World War One.[1]

M. Hakan Yavuz of Utah University, in an article published in the *Middle East Critique,* has noted that WATS refuses to invite scholars who refrain from examining events within the framework of genocide. Yavuz posits that the events relating to the relocation of Armenians are uncritically cast as genocide by WATS and this categorization leads to a distancing from historical inquiry, leading to the debate being transformed into a moral and legal argument.[2] Subsequently, scholars who do not analyze events within this framework are castigated as genocide deniers.

Refusing to engage in paradigmatic debates with fellow academics would be considered unacceptable in any other field of scholarly inquiry. Yet WATS has pursued a strategy of refusing to engage with alternative narratives and scholars who adopt a critical approach. This has also resulted in the construction of an echo chamber in which many of the scholars involved in the WATS project have refrained from engaging with critical review articles published in scholarly journals in relation to their own work on the relocation of Armenians.

The Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM) reiterates its call that genuine scholarly debate and dialogue can only be established by the coming together of all concerned parties. Hitherto all efforts to bring scholars from both sides of the debate together have failed. Furthermore, the fact that the latest WATS event will be held in Germany has not been lost on many commentators given the recent lull in relations between Turkey and Germany which is partly related to the German parliament passing a non-binding resolution accepting the Armenian genocide in 2016.

[1] Workshop on Armenian Turkish Scholarship (WATS) 2015, *USC Dornife Institute of Armenian Studies*, October, 2015, accessed August 10, 2017, https://armenian.usc.edu/program/workshop-on-armenian-turkish-scholarship-wats-2015.

[2] M. Hakan Yavuz, "Contours of Scholarship on Armenian-Turkish Relations," *Middle East Critique* 20 (2011): 234.

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