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**From:** [redacted]  
**Sent:** 26 June 2009 12:42  
**To:** [redacted]  
**Cc:** [redacted]  
**Subject:** Launch of the Turkish Blue Book Translation  
**Importance:** High

[redacted]

1. I attended the launch of the Turkish translation of the Blue Book (a 1916 account of the massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire published in the UK), held at the Human Rights Association offices today. Ara Sarafian, a British-Armenian historian and Lord Avebury, both involved in its translation and publication, were present.

2. Lord Avebury said that the initiative to produce a complete Turkish translation had started in 2005 when the then Parliamentary Speaker Bulent Arinc wrote to the UK Parliament to ask them to repudiate the Blue Book on the basis that it was a wartime document written for propaganda purposes and the evidence was unreliable. UK Parliamentarians had written to all Turkish MPs, inviting them to engage in a debate on the Blue Book, but had received no reply. They had concluded that it was very difficult for Turkish Parliamentarians to debate this issue because there was no Turkish translation of the book available.

3. Lord Avebury went on to say that he thought it was important that there was a public debate in Turkey on this issue and at present there were only denialist publications available. [redacted]

4. In his intervention, Ara Sarafian gave some more background on the Blue Book and explained his concern that Turkish criticisms of the book were based on a denial that the sources existed, when Western historians were able to access and read those sources in the original. It was legitimate to criticise the sources and there were interesting questions about the validity of the evidence, but these were unfortunately not being asked. In his view, the only people who should be called "deniers" were those who refused to engage in a debate about the evidence.

5. Publisher Ragıp Zarakolu said that copies of the translation had been sent to Parliament, but for "security reasons" they had not yet been distributed. He did not understand this, but he respected Parliamentary procedures and hoped that they would reach their targets.

6. Questions rapidly deteriorated into grandstanding between A301 victims and various nationalist historians and Gul Arslan from the Australian-Turkish Friendship Association. Questions included:

- Whether the UK would pay compensation for the warships which were not delivered to the Ottoman Empire, recognise the Azeri genocide and repudiate various cartoons of Turks dating from the early 20th Century.  
Sarafian responded that these were important questions and he would promise to join a discussion on these issues, including the issue an Azeri genocide by Armenia. But because they were important they needed to be considered on their own merits. It was not appropriate to raise them as a side-issue in this forum.

- Whether they would condemn European countries Switzerland and France, which recognised genocide and banned discussion and debate  
Lord Avebury gave a confused reply saying that because Switzerland and France were members of the EU, it was not as necessary to be proactive because these issues could be taken to the ECHR and this was not the case in Turkey (sic).  
Sarafian said he was personally opposed to this legislation and received a lot of criticism from the diaspora because of it. It was essential to allow debate.

7. [redacted]

### **Comment**

[redacted]

9. General press lines on Armenia-Azerbaijan are attached. [redacted] has any additional lines on the Blue Book that would be useful.

[redacted]