

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION (IPU) ANNUAL ASSEMBLY
COUNTRY BRIEFING - ARMENIA

UK-ARMENIA BILATERAL RELATIONS

ARMENIAN MASSACRES

Between 1915 and 1916, an estimated 1 to 1.5 million ethnic Armenian citizens of the Ottoman Empire were killed during deportations to the Syrian desert. The British Government recognises the terrible suffering that was inflicted on Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire and acknowledges the strength of feeling regarding this terrible episode of history. The massacres were a great tragedy, which were condemned by the British Government of the day, and we continue to endorse that view.

The British Government's policy on genocide recognition is that as genocide is a crime it is for courts and not governments to decide whether genocide has occurred. The UK therefore recognises as genocide only those events that have been decided so by international courts: for example, those in Srebrenica and Rwanda.

Even though the UK does not recognise the Armenian Massacres of 1915 as genocide it does not impact on our bilateral relations. The Armenian Government recognises the UK's wider policy on genocide recognition. Lobbying for recognition tends to be limited to members of the Armenian diaspora in the UK. Although not recognising the events as genocide, the Minister for Europe visited the Armenian genocide museum during his trip to Yerevan in September 2012.