

UK Policy

The UK 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. Our view remains, however, that it is not for governments to decide whether genocide has been committed as this is a complex legal question. Where an international legal body finds a crime to have been genocide, this will often play an important part in whether we will recognise one as such. Instead our position focuses on the need for the governments of Turkey and Armenia to adopt some form of truth and reconciliation process to help both countries move forward on this issue. We believe that this issue can only be resolved through a process owned by those directly involved.

We will, as ever, encourage the Governments of Armenia and Turkey to look to the future and build a better relationship between their countries. In the meantime, we will continue to work for peace, security and mutual understanding in the region.

Holocaust

The International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg and other courts involved in prosecuting those responsible for the Holocaust did not formally and explicitly rule that the Holocaust was a crime of genocide. However, in terms of the development and definition of the crime itself, the Holocaust was the definitional moment. It became central to the recognition and codification of the crime. As such, and in line with many other countries, the British Government recognises the Holocaust as genocide and refers to it as such.

More broadly in relation to other atrocities, the 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 found so by international courts, for example, those in Srebrenica and Rwanda.

Geoffrey Robinson Paper

Your letter refers the Freedom of Information request of 2009 on the matter. HMG made clear that it wasn't best placed to make a judgement (historical or legal) on whether or not the Armenian massacres constituted genocide.

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Minister for Europe's visit to the Genocide Memorial

You may wish to note I undertook a visit to the Tsitsernakaberd memorial in Yerevan in a private capacity during my last visit in September 2012.