

Armenia

Will the Government review its position on the Armenian genocide in view of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee resolution of 4 March 2010 describing the killing of Armenians by Turkish forces during World War I as genocide and the 11 March vote in the Swedish Parliament to the same effect?

Recent resolutions in the US Congress and the Swedish Riksdag have not changed the UK Government view that it is for the Turkish and Armenian people to address this issue together. Neither the US nor the Swedish government have changed their own positions as a result of these votes.

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Why did you support the EU declarations in 1997 and 2001 for the Armenian massacre to be recognised as genocide?

As the noble has pointed out, during my time in the European Parliament I did support the EU declarations on recognising the Armenian genocide; but this was before I was a Government Minister. I now take the view that it is for the peoples of Armenia and Turkey to address their common history.

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Why did the Minister for Europe sign an early day motion for the British government to recognise the Armenian genocide?

Regarding the Minister for Europe's signature of the Early Day Motion, Chris Bryant's own words on this subject are "It is true that I signed the motion; however I did so before I was a Government Minister. While we acknowledge and regret the terrible suffering inflicted on the Ottoman Armenian population early in the past century, we do not think it would be helpful for us as a Government to take a new formal position at this point."

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Will the Government support the private members bill (PMB) tabled by Andrew Dismore MP which seeks to introduce a national day to remember and learn about the Armenian genocide?

The Government does not support the Private Members Bill tabled by Andrew Dismore, due for a second reading on 30 April. As I have already highlighted it would be counter productive for the UK Government to take any action that could jeopardise the normalisation process between Turkey and Armenia.

The Government will not recognise the Armenian genocide because its only interest in the South Caucasus is Caspian oil and gas.

The noble has suggested that our position on the Armenian genocide is in some way connected to our position on Caspian oil and gas. While security of energy supply is one aspect of UK interests in the South Caucasus, our interests are much broader than this one issue. We want all countries in the region to be secure, stable and prosperous, including Armenia. This is strongly in the interest of the South Caucasus, Turkey and the EU. We believe the current progress in Armenia and Turkey's relations will benefit both countries and the region as a whole and encourage them to take this process forward, despite the challenges.

The Government's position on the “genocide” is contradicted by the British Government's own publication, the 1916 Blue Book?

The noble **has referred to the 1916 Blue Book, entitled “*The treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*”. This is a Parliament-owned document. It contains many compelling reports of eye-witness accounts of the events in question. It should be considered alongside other documents relating to the events of 1915-16 in archives around the world. But it does not change our position that it is first and foremost for the Turkish and Armenian peoples to address their common history together.**

What about the report adopted by the UN that stated the Ottoman massacre of Armenians in 1915-16 could be cited as an example of genocide?

Although the UN sub-commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities adopted a report on genocide in 1985 which referred to the Armenian massacres as an example of genocide, we are not aware of it being mentioned in any UN document or forum since then. This report does not change the Government's position.

In 2002 The International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) ruled that the 1915/17 massacres could be described as genocide, this is an independent evaluation, why does HMG dismiss there findings?

As with the Geoffrey Robertson report, the ICTJ also said the 1948 UN Genocide convention was not retrospective. It is for the Turkish and Armenian people to address their common history. We encourage any process which helps them do so in an open, honest and constructive manner.

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What do you say to the allegations that you are refusing to acknowledge a genocide because this would affect the UK-Turkish relationship?

We don't accept this allegation. The UK's excellent relationship with Turkey is long-standing and based on a wide range of bilateral and multilateral issues. Discussion about the events of 1915 forms part of the relationship. But we believe that it is first and foremost for the Turkish and Armenian peoples to address their common history.

The Government does not recognise the 1915 events as genocide because of concern over offending Turkey as an important NATO partner.

We reject the allegation that the UK position on the 1915 events is motivated by concern over offending Turkey as a NATO partner.

The UK's excellent relationship with Turkey is long-standing and based on a wide range of bilateral and multilateral issues.

Discussion about the events of 1915 forms part of the relationship.

But we believe that it is first and foremost for the Turkish and Armenian peoples to address their common history.

Did Gordon Brown lobby the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan on recognising the Armenian massacres or making progress on the normalisation protocols?

On 16 March, the Prime Minister met with the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan in London. Turkey is an important foreign policy partner for the UK, on a range of international issues, such as Iran, Cyprus and the EU, and there was not an opportunity to discuss relations with Armenia on this occasion.

However, Chris Bryant, Minister for Europe, discussed Turkey – Armenia relations with his Turkish counterpart, during the Turkish Prime Minister's visit. He also lobbied his counterpart in January and February this year to encourage progress on the normalisation of relations with Armenia.

Is recognition of the events as genocide a pre-condition for Turkey's membership of the EU?

The noble has asked if Turkey's recognition of the events as genocide is a precondition for their membership in the EU. It is not. However, under the political criteria for membership Turkey is expected to maintain 'good neighbourly relations' with countries in the region, which includes Armenia.

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