

1915 EVENTS 'INSTRUMENTALIZED' IN POLITICS: EXPERTS - YENİ ŞAFAK - 24.04.2020

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The Armenian allegations surrounding the events of 1915 have been politically "instrumentalized" in the construction of the Armenian identity, according to experts.

French historian Maxime Gauin, a guest academician in the Center For Eurasian Studies, and Mustafa Serdar Palabiyik at TOBB University of Economics and Technology in Turkey's capital Ankara commented on the 1915 events and Armenia's approach to the issue.

Gauin said the 1915 events were instrumentalized to consolidate Armenian identity against the fear of assimilation in the Armenian diaspora -- especially in France and the US -- triggering hostility against Turkey instead of effectively protecting their language and culture of the traditional establishments.

He went on to say that Armenia used its "eternal victim status" to hide occupation and the ethnic cleansing of Azerbaijanis from 1992 to 1994.

He further said that Armenia would no longer need the financial support of the diaspora if an Armenian government could attract Turkish and Azerbaijani investment after settling disputes with these neighboring countries.

According to Gauin, the US and members of the EU use allegations relating to the 1915

events as a political tool.

He argued that the majority of the US Congress ignored the interests of their own country to vote in favor of recognizing "genocide" in a vote last fall. However, the move was politically motivated and even members of congress recognizing that the decision came following rising tensions with Turkey.

Palabiyik, for his part, said references to "victimization" have played a significant part in the modern Armenian identity.

He asserted that Armenian state policy sought to force the international community to recognize the Armenian "genocide," a goal that was included in the country's constitution in 1990.

Stressing that the "so-called Armenian genocide" was engraved into the education system of the country, he said the events 1915 were always kept alive in the mind of Armenians throughout education.

He added that the 1915 events were one of the most pressing matters of Turkey's political relations with the US and EU, underlining that some EU countries recognized the 1915 events as "genocide" after Turkey became an EU candidate in 1999 -- one of the main indicators raising suspicions that the issue has been politicized.

Palabiyik argued that the events of 1915 were cited whenever there was political tension between Turkey and the US or the EU.

The Armenian diaspora was the driving force behind the so-called "genocide" allegations, he said, adding that the Armenian diaspora may be more dominant in these efforts than Armenia itself.

He said the diaspora was much stronger than the Armenian government in financial and political clout and that it sought to influence Erevan's domestic and foreign policy.

Palabiyik concluded that some Armenian politicians saw the diaspora leaders as "foreign powers" who do more talking than financially contributing to the country.

- Turkish stance on 1915 events

Turkey's position on the events of 1915 is that the deaths of Armenians in eastern Anatolia took place when some sided with invading Russians and revolted against Ottoman forces. A subsequent relocation of Armenians resulted in numerous casualties.

Turkey objects to the presentation of these incidents as "genocide," describing them as a tragedy in which both sides suffered casualties.

Ankara has repeatedly proposed the creation of a joint commission of historians from Turkey and Armenia as well as international experts to tackle the issue.

Photo: Mustafa Serdar Palabıyık (right), Maxime Gauin (left)

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