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THE CENTENNIAL OF THE BALKAN WARS

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October 8, 1912 is the date the Balkan wars started. During these wars, almost two hundred thousand soldiers lost their lives on the fronts within less than a year. Although it is assumed that the number of civilian deaths is multitudes of this number, no exact calculation has been made. The Turkish migration, starting from Thrace (Rumelia) with the War of 93 between 1877 and 1878, has turned into an ultimate deportation during the Balkan Wars and the succeeding World War. The numbers of those who perished or migrated has taken its place among the unrecorded tragedies of recent history with untold stories, buried in the collective memory of the Turkish people. Among the limited numbers of research made on this issue, those of Ambassador Bilal Şimşir and Professor Justin McCarthy are the first to come to mind.

Indifference and negligence is not the answer to why the number of atrocities, deaths and migrations the Turks were subjected to in Rumelia was not recorded and why those responsible for these acts were not brought to account. The Republic of Turkey, which has assumed the heritage of the Ottoman state, has adopted the principle of founding the new state on looking forward to the future, opening a new chapter and bringing peace and stability to the region in the future instead of coming to terms with the past.

This approach of the Turkish Republic was also valid for the atrocities mutually committed in the eastern borders of the Ottoman state in the eve and during the First World War. It was hoped also here that leaving the tragedies of the war behind would serve a new understanding. While Turkeys silence has been regarded as a stand of maturity in the context of the tragedies on the other fronts, the Armenian side in particular and their advocates who helped provoke and mobilize the Armenians have resorted to abusing it as acceptance of crime merely through the interpretation that silence is rooted in consent.

At the point reached today, unfortunately, the old books are opened enabling mutual accusations and callings to account, thus leading the constructive energy towards developing good neighborly relations to give way to destructive energy. Notwithstanding, a great potential exists for the peoples and governments of both countries to achieve together regional peace and prosperity. Historical memory and emotions are never one-sided. A saying in this geography could give guidance to efforts of imposition: enforced beauty cannot be. The sincere call of Center for Eurasian Studies, which pays meticulous care to academically filtering Turkish-Armenian relations, is for the constructive energy to come into play as soon as possible.

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