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ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE

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A Proud Man's Contumely

Armenian Community Outraged By Genocide Denial

JERUSALEM (PIO) - The Armenian community of Jerusalem this week expressed outrage at the latest attempt, by a "historian of Modern Greek and Ottoman history, and of the Holocaust," at rubbishing Armenian charges of a systematic plan by the Ottoman Turk to annihilate their ancient race.

Spokesmen for both the Armenian Patriarchate and the lay community found it "inexcusable" that a Jewish scholar could bring himself to belittle the Turkish massacres of 1915, in an article published in the "Jerusalem Post" recently.

"This smacks of nothing less than blood-libel," a community leader raged.

Yitzhak Kerem, the author of the offending op-ed piece, "could not have chosen a worse moment to air his "distorted version of history," he added.

"As a curtain-raiser to Armenian Genocide Day (April 24), the date on which Armenians all over the world mourn the victims of the Turkish massacres, Kerem's "curious musing" is poignantly reminiscent of Hitler's infamous aside: 'Who remembers the Armenians?'" another prominent Armenian remarked.

One Armenian scholar charged Kerem with contributing to "the endless machinations of the enemies of the Armenian people and their diabolical intent to pervert history."

He wondered where the Jewish historian obtained his "half-baked truths. Certainly not from the Turkish government," given the fact that it still has to come good on its promise to really de-classify and throw open the archives of the Ottoman era.

A Patriarchate spokesman said that while "we are in no position to question Kerem's credentials, we are perplexed and disturbed by the obvious errors in his diatribe."

He noted several discrepancies and inconsistencies in Kerem's argument.

"Even the most modest student of history would not have failed to notice them," he said. He found Kerem's attempt at exonerating the Turks incredible if not pathetic.

"Kerem claims that the Armenians were attempting 'to overturn the Ottoman empire...', " he said. "How can anyone in his right mind imagine 'overconfident and naive Armenian groups' (Kerem's words) posing a threat to the mighty Ottoman empire that had ruled the world for centuries, much less attempting to overthrow it?"

(MORE)

DENIAL 2 Jerusalem

Even the least presumptive of English dictionaries defines genocide as "deliberate and systematic extermination of racial or national groups." No figures are stipulated. Whether 1,000 or 1,000,000 are put to the sword, the crime is still genocide. For Kerem, the deaths of 300,000 Armenians during a Turkish "relocation" in 1917 (his figures), was merely a "tragedy."

"There was no Turkish design to annihilate" the Armenians, he blandly states, ending his epistle with the proclamation: "The Armenian massacre of 1915 cannot be equated with the Holocaust."

A community leader pointed out that "the Turks destroyed 1.5 million Armenians out of a total population of 4 million - more than one third of the Armenian race: this is not genocide? Calling this genocide is an 'exaggeration'?"

He noted that "in civilized countries, any creature daring to deny the Holocaust would lay his person open to prosecution. If we are to believe Kerem's arguments, then we might as well believe all those misguided souls who have minimize and even deny the Holocaust," he stated.

"This (op-ed) piece is nothing but a proud man's contumely," he added. "The day it appeared was a sad day for us. If a historian has the 'chutzpah' to deny established facts, then we might as well forget the lessons of history. But though we know how to forgive, we shall never forget."

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