

International Conference

**The International Recognition of the Armenian Genocide:  
Memorial, Political, and Geopolitical Stakes of a Decades-Long Unfinished Struggle**

Yerevan, Armenia, October 23-25, 2024

Despite the proliferation of scholarship and academic research that has unequivocally proven its occurrence, the traumatic memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 has been met with state-sponsored denial in Turkey—the successor state of the Ottoman Empire which committed the crime. Armenians in the diaspora (the vast majority of whom descend from families that survived the genocide) have fought against denialist narrative and policies perpetuated by Turkish authorities on this subject for decades. Further opposition to this denial can be found within the Republic of Armenia, where many citizens hail from survivors, and where denial by Turkey and allied Azerbaijan is perceived as one of many manifestations of hostility on the part of these two neighboring states. Furthermore, the Republic's very structural framework has been shaped by recognition efforts: Article 11 of the Declaration of Independence stipulates that the Armenian state unequivocally supports efforts towards international recognition of the genocide.

While conversations surrounding the Armenian Genocide and the subsequent political and geopolitical developments which stemmed from it were omnipresent within Armenian circles from the interwar period onwards, this was not the case within the international community. The conceptualization of the crime of genocide itself, following the Jewish Holocaust during World War II, and the passage of the fiftieth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in 1965—a milestone commemorated in Yerevan and diaspora-inhabited cities around the globe—enabled Armenians and their supporters to rescue the tragedy of 1915 from the international oblivion in which it had been trapped. As transnational activism surrounding the Armenian Genocide mobilized, the 1960s and 1970s were marked by an increasingly assertive and virulent politicization of the memory of the genocide; this activism took a variety of forms, from efforts to build monuments dedicated to the genocide (the most famous of which was the one in Yerevan, inaugurated in 1967 on Tsitsernakaberd Hill in Yerevan), to paramilitary violence by armed groups (ASALA, for Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia, and JcAG, for Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide [later renamed ARA, for Armenian Revolutionary Army], active in the 1970s and 1980s).

In this context, in the absence of any hope of recognition by Turkey (let alone apologies or reparations), Armenian activists started to mobilize to obtain recognition of the Armenian Genocide from both resident state institutions and international government organizations alike. Their considerable and often years- or decades-long efforts eventually resulted in recognition of the genocide among local and national institutions across the globe. Several of the earliest state governments to recognize the genocide included Uruguay (as early as 1965), Greece, Lebanon, Argentina, Russia, and France (in 2001); more recent recognizers include Germany, Syria, and the United States (through Congress in 2019 and the executive branch in 2021). Conversely, other states and institutions have not yet officially solved the issue, remaining ambiguous, to say the least, on the matter: notable examples include Israel, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Furthermore, many African and Asian states and institutions (save for a few notable exceptions) have not been in a position to pronounce their views on the legitimacy

of efforts to recognize the Armenian Genocide, rendering their stance on the matter difficult to decipher—if not unknown.

The central aim of this international conference is to study how and why, since the end of the Second World War and more significantly since the 1960s onwards, international actors have positioned themselves on the matter of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide—as well as how and why their respective positions have evolved over time. A principal concrete goal will be to analyze and compare the processes of recognizing (or refusing to recognize) the Armenian Genocide across a number of state governments, national and international stakeholders, and institutions at the local or provincial level, in order to understand when, why, and how some adopt clear positions in favor of recognition while others remain ambivalent. Diplomatic relations and geopolitical engagement with Turkey is often cited as a major determinant in navigating these processes; while this is an important factor at play, it should not mask or overshadow the recognition processes themselves, which are often deeply complex and balance the interests of a multiplicity of stakeholders on the issue. Therefore, this conference will not restrict itself to solely examining prominent state actors or international organizations: it will engage with a multitude of state institutions and non-state actors (such as media organizations, NGOs, lobbies, private-sector actors, etc.) alike, including individuals and the ideologies which may motivate them, in order to better grasp these processes.

Whereas the Armenian Genocide is often—and rightfully—perceived and studied as a topic pertaining to the history of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Empire and of World War I, this international conference aims to provide a better understanding of the Armenian Genocide as a significant contemporary political, geopolitical, and memorial subject of study at different local, national, international, and transnational levels. By specifically focusing on who supports and who opposes the recognition of the genocide and how these positions are fashioned and/or implemented, this conference will also provide an original perspective on the institutions, politics, and societies of the states or organizations that will be discussed, investigating the complex dynamics of memory at play. Comparative studies which link the Armenian case with other genocides or episodes of mass atrocity's political memory will be welcomed, as well as reflections on how the political activism to formally recognize and memorialize one genocide may impact others. Despite being centered on the Armenian Genocide, this conference will also be an opportunity to consider the crime of genocide and its recognition (alongside national, international, and transnational political issues) through a broad, kaleidoscopic lens.

This conference is organized jointly by the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation (Edita Gzoyan) and the Laboratoire MIMMOC (Mémoires, Identités, Marginalités dans le Monde Occidental Contemporain) of the University of Poitiers, France (Julien Zarifian).

*Date:* October 23-25, 2024

*Location:* Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation, Yerevan, Armenia

Proposals for papers must be submitted in English, which will be the language of the conference. Proposals should consist of the title and abstract of the paper (500 words maximum), as well as a short bio-bibliography; they should be sent to both Edita Gzoyan (gzoyan.edita@genocide-museum.am) and Julien Zarifian (julien.zarifian@univ-poitiers.fr) by May 15, 2024. Applicants will be notified whether or not their proposal has been accepted by June 15, 2024.

### Brief Bibliography

Adjemian, Boris, Zarifian, Julien, « La reconnaissance internationale du génocide des Arméniens. Histoire, enjeux, pratiques », *20 & 21. Revue d'histoire* 158 (2023): 149-165.

Aram I, “The Armenian Genocide: From Recognition to Reparations,” *International Criminal Law Review* 2 (2014): 233-241.

Armoudian, Maria, Smits, Katherine, “How Soon We Forget: National Myth-Making and Recognition of the Armenian Genocide”, *Journal of Genocide Research* (2023), DOI: [10.1080/14623528.2023.2268483](https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2023.2268483).

Auron, Yair, *The Banality of Denial. Israel and the Armenian Genocide* (Piscataway: Transaction Publishers, 2003).

Avedian, Vahagn, *Knowledge and Acknowledgement in the Politics of Memory of the Armenian Genocide* (Oxon & New York: Routledge, 2019).

Ben-Aharon, Eldad, “A Unique Denial: Israel’s Foreign Policy and the Armenian Genocide,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42/4 (2015): 638-654.

Fittante, Daniel, “Memory Entrepreneurship: Armenian Genocide Recognition in Europe,” *International Studies Quarterly* 68 (2023), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqad100>.

Koinova, Maria, “Conflict and Cooperation in Armenian Diaspora Mobilisation for Genocide Recognition,” in *Diaspora as Cultures of Cooperation. Migration, Diasporas and Citizenship*, eds. Carment D., Sadjed A. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017):111-129.

Kebranian, Nanor, “Genocide, History, and the Law: Legal Performativity and Recognition of the Armenian Genocide in France and Germany,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 2 (2020): 253–273.

Marutyan, Harutyun. “«Հիշում եմ և պահանջում» կարգախոսը և Հայոց ցեղասպանության հիշողության փոխանցման մարտահրավերները 21-րդ դարում” (“The Motto ‘I Remember and Demand’ and the Challenges of Transmission of the Armenian Genocide Memory in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”), *Ts’eghaspanagitakan handes* 9, no. 2 (2021): 9-54.

Matiossian, Vartan, *The Politics of Naming the Armenian Genocide. Language, History and “Medz Yeghern”* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2022).

Nefes, Türkay Salim, Gürpınar, Doğan, Kaymak, Özgür, “Turkish Parliamentary Debates about the International Recognition of the Armenian genocide: Development and Variations in the Official Denialism,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 4 (2023): 883-899.

Savelsberg, Joachim, *Knowing about Genocide: Armenian Suffering and Epistemic Struggle* (Oakland: UC Press, 2021).

Souleimanov, Emil, Ehrmann, Maya, “The Issue of the Recognition of the Armenian Genocide as a Political Phenomenon,” *MERIA* 18, (2014): 25–37.

Suvaryan, Yuri et al (eds.), *Հայոց ցեղասպանություն-100. նախաջումից՝ հասունում. միջազգային գիտաժողովի զեկուցումների դրույթներ ժողովածու (The Armenian Genocide – 100. From Recognition to Reparation. Proceedings of International Conference)* (Yerevan: Gitutyun, 2016).

Vartazaryan, Gor, “Legal Performativity: Recognition of the Armenian Genocide in the Czech Republic,” *Journal of Nationalism Memory & Language Politics* 2 (2022): 194-210.

Zarifian, Julien, “The United States and the (Non-)Recognition of the Armenian Genocide,” *Études arméniennes contemporaines* 1 (2013): 75-95.

Zarifian, Julien. « Les médias américains et la (non-)reconnaissance du génocide des Arméniens aux États-Unis », *Revue française d'études américaines* 142 (2015): 55-71.