

April 24 as Armenian Genocide Memorial Day. The motion would also recognize commemorative days for the Holocaust, Rwandan genocide and Ukrainian famine and genocide.

The Turkish ambassador to Canada, Selcuk Unal, told *Embassy* in an email April 28 that motions such as M-587 "will not affect Turkey's position and views on this matter."

"Parliaments and parliamentarians are of course free to adopt declarations, motions, resolutions or bills on any issue they deem necessary or relevant. It is the gift as well as the necessity of democracy," Mr. Unal said. But: "we believe parliaments cannot judge the history or act as Courts."

The ambassador explained Turkey doesn't deny Armenians suffered during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, but believes there is no legal and historical consensus about 1915 and, as such, objects to the "genocide" label.

"In our view, M-587 consists disputable elements from legal and historical perspectives. What from the outset seems like a noble aim to honour, and remember all atrocities, considering the date when it was discussed and voted, it shows that its main objective was to single out the events of 1915," said Mr. Unal.

He pointed out the motion also does not mention the Srebrenica massacre of a thousand Muslim men and boys in 1995, which has been recognized by the UN as a genocide. Bosnian groups have been critical of this omission.

"This causes questions regarding the noble and moral objective of the motion in regard to its 1915 aspect as well as its principled approach, which seems not inclusive," said Mr. Unal.

When Canadian Parliament originally recognized the genocide in 2004, Turkey recalled its ambassador from Ottawa for about a month. Mr. Unal did not say whether the Turkish government would be staging any additional response this time around.

Apraham Niziblian of the Armenian National Committee of Canada, one of the organizers of the Parliament Hill demonstration, said he was "very excited" about the motion and he had no comments about the Turkish supporters opposite Armenians on the Hill.

"I want reconciliation," said Mr. Niziblian. "That's the importance here, that's why we're here to thank the Canadian



The pro-Armenian side of a rally that began on Parliament Hill, April 24. *Embassy Photo: Sam G*

Parliament. They've facilitated that, now it's the Turkish government's turn to also recognize the genocide and facilitate reconciliation between the Armenians and the Turks."

MPs from all parties spoke to the crowd at Parliament Hill, including Elizabeth May for the Green Party, Alexandre Boulerice for the NDP, and Irwin Cotler for the Liberals.

An NDP representative read a statement by opposition leader Tom Mulcair, who referenced a "duty to insist that these historic realities be recognized by all for what they were, otherwise these horrors will be repeated elsewhere."

Ms. May acknowledged the contingent of Turkish-Canadian supporters who also came to Parliament Hill Tuesday. "I dream of a day when this rally includes both groups of people on both sides of this lawn to gather together and acknowledge what occurred," she said.

The two groups were divided on the Hill lawn by metal barriers and a wide, heavily policed space. The colourful crowd of several thousand Armenian supporters—including several ambassadors and groups representing Jews, Greeks, Assyrians, Kurds, Lebanese, and Russians, according to Mr. Niziblian—was on the right, waving not just Armenian flags but Canada and Quebec flags, too.

One supporter, Berj Meinssain, said his father was a seven-year-old Armenian who fled to Eastern Anatolia in 1915. His father took refuge among Kurdish people before settling in Syria, then in Lebanon, where Mr. Meinssain was born. He comes to Parliament Hill every year on April 24 to his home in Montreal to remember.

"Our grandparents were killed in Turkey," said Jacoub, an Armenian Canadian who wouldn't provide his last name but had their own identity in that country. "That's why they were killed, that's why we're trying to teach my kids."

"We want the world to know that the Ottomans killed our grandparents," said a nine-year-old son, Andrew.

"We've been waiting for justice, and we're here to protest and to demand justice," said 15-year-old Armenian-Canadian Alexia Hamalian. She said she didn't know why Turkish people were on the Hill but that it wasn't really their day. "I don't really think they belong here right now."

On the left side of Parliament Hill, there was indeed a smaller crowd of several hundred red-clad members of the Turkish community.

Before speeches began, Mehmet Karadas, president of the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations, spoke to *Embassy*.

"This is a political issue," he said.

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