



<http://www.armenianproject2015.org/>

For Immediate Release

Armenian Genocide Centennial Commemoration in Istanbul *Groups To Bring Together Turks and Armenians from Around the World*

(Istanbul, December 8, 2014) – Turkish and Armenian-American organizations are working together to commemorate the centennial of the Armenian Genocide on April 24, 2015 and to encourage Armenians from around the world to attend, DurDe and Project 2015 said today. The concerted campaign by Ottoman leaders a century ago resulted in the deaths and exile of the vast majority of their Armenian citizens.

While Turkish groups have organized memorial events in Istanbul for the past several years, DurDe and Project 2015, a US-based organization, are working to ensure that a large contingent of Armenians come to Turkey for the historic centennial commemoration.

“We encourage and welcome Armenians from around the globe to assemble with citizens of Turkey in Istanbul to participate in these memorial events,” said [Levent Sensever](#) of DurDe. “As Turks, we want to express our solidarity with Armenians as we pay our respects to the victims and survivors of this terrible crime, and press our government to recognize the genocide.”

The events in Istanbul will include a public assembly in Taksim on the evening of April 24. It will also include a memorial service at Şişli Armenian Apostolic Cemetery (Şişli Ermeni Gregoryen Mezarlığı), where Sevag Şahin Balıkçı is buried; Balıkçı was an Armenian soldier serving in the Turkish military and murdered by a Turkish soldier on April 24, 2011. Information about the planned events can be found at www.armenianproject2015.org.

“As Armenians, we are going to Istanbul to memorialize the brutal massacre of our family members, and to remind the world that 100 years later, we are still seeking justice and accountability from the Turkish government,” said [Sarah Leah Whitson](#), board member of Project 2015. “For many of us, this is a first return to the lands of our ancestors, who lived here for thousands of years before their murders and expulsions 100 years ago.”

Discussion of the Armenian Genocide in Turkey remains a highly sensitive subject in Turkey and subject to criminal sanctions. The Turkish government has prosecuted

journalists, writers and academics for making reference to the Armenian Genocide. However, past commemorations of the Armenian Genocide in Istanbul have taken place without incident, and with the benefit of municipal police protection.

In 2014, then-Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan expressed his condolences to the grandchildren of “Armenians who lost their lives in the context of the early 20th century” but failed to acknowledge the role of the Ottoman government in systematically causing these losses. The Turkish government has refused to recognize the massacres of the Armenians as genocide.

“As Turks, we are striving to broaden the space to discuss the events leading to the near total destruction of one of the region’s oldest indigenous communities,” Sensever said. “We want to demonstrate to the world that while the Turkish government may not be ready to come to terms with this country’s past, we as citizens of Turkey are ready.”

DurDe is one of Turkey’s leading civil and human rights organizations, working to combat racism, nationalism and hate crimes. It is an activist network that in recent years has played an important role in organizing commemorations for the Armenian Genocide in Istanbul. Project 2015 is a US-based non-profit organization comprised of Armenians, Turks and Americans to encourage wide participation in the commemoration events in Istanbul.

“Commemorating the Armenian Genocide in the place where the crimes took place will be a deeply meaningful experience,” said [Nancy Kricorian](#), Project 2015 board member. “Our presence in Istanbul will be a form of resistance to erasure and denial.”

For more information about Project 2015 and the planned commemoration events, visit:

<http://www.armenianproject2015.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ArmenianProject2015>

Follow on Twitter: [@2015_Project](#)

Email for questions: armenianproject2015@gmail.com

For more information about DurDe, visit:

<https://www.durde.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/yuzyillik.yuzlesme>

Follow on Twitter: [@DurDeTr](#)

For information about the Armenian Genocide, visit:

<http://www.armenian-genocide.org/genocidfaq.html>

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