

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE DANIEL FRIED SPELLS OUT U.S. POLICY ON THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Armenian National Institute

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“To foster reconciliation and peace based on an understanding of history, not a denial of it.”

Washington, DC - Speaking to an audience of Armenian-Americans gathered in Washington for a national conference organized by the Armenian Assembly of America and co-sponsored by more than a dozen U.S.-based Armenian community organizations, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Daniel Fried called on “Turkey to reflect more seriously about subjects which have been taboo for generations in that country.” He added: “We do not support...export of denialist literature or positions. We do support efforts by Turkey to deal with its history more seriously.”

While continuing to avoid the term ‘genocide,’ and reflecting earlier language used by President George W. Bush in his April 24 commemorative statements, Fried applied what has been referred to as the dictionary definition of the events: “murders on a mass scale, killings without justification, deportations. Over 1.5 million people lost their lives, innocent victims.”

Admitting that the administration has “a policy which many of you disagree with,” the Assistant Secretary also stated that “the United States government has never denied the events of 1915.”

Stressing what additional steps Turkey needs to take, Fried remarked: “We believe that the tragedy of 1915, the killings, is of enormous human significance and its historical assessment should be determined not on the basis of politics, but introspection among civic leaders and scholars. This process has begun in Turkey where it needs to take place.”

Speaking about the pace of this process in Turkey, he went on to say, however: “It is certainly not going fast enough to satisfy you. It is not going fast enough to satisfy us.”

He granted that “dealing with the history of the mass killings of Armenians is painful for Turkey,” but also expressed hope that it will “bring greater understanding to Turks of their own history.”

Fried also underlined the U.S. view that “a productive dialogue is the best way to establish a shared understanding of history that honors the victims of these horrific events.”

In what appeared to be an oblique reference to the independent report prepared by the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) at the request of the much-disputed Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC), Fried added: “It produced a serious look at those issues which we have recognized officially.”

Despite the implied State Department recognition of this report, Fried also made it clear that the “U.S. position on events of 1915 has not changed.”

It may be noted that the ICTJ report, issued in 2003, reached the conclusion that “the Events, viewed collectively, can thus be said to include all of the elements of the crime of genocide as defined in the [1948 Genocide] Convention, and legal scholars as well as historians, politicians, journalists and other people would be justified in continuing to so describe them.”

The Assistant Secretary concluded his remarks by saying: “We will continue to urge our Turkish friends to face difficult issues of their past seriously, and we will urge Armenia to help the Turks make this possible without ever sacrificing historical truth or your position.”

A complete transcript of the March 27, 2006, statement and remarks made by Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried may be viewed at:

<http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/63791.htm>

The Armenian National Institute is a Washington-based organization dedicated to the study, research, and affirmation of the Armenian Genocide. <http://www.armenian-genocide.org/>