



No. EN 175/15

April 17, 2015

**H.E. Joachim Gauck**  
**Office of the Federal President**  
**Spreeweg 1**  
**10557 Berlin**

Your Excellency,

It is with great interest that we follow the ongoing debate in Germany concerning the Genocide that occurred in the Ottoman Empire starting from the year 1915. However, we are greatly astonished to hear that the word “Genocide” is being avoided due to political reasons.

During these dark years, our church lost the majority of its faithful. The wound caused by this Genocide which we call in our Syriac-Aramaic language “Sayfo”, was never healed due to the persistent denial of the very fact of the Genocide by the Turkish state until today.

The result of this first Genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the loss of 1.5 million Armenians, about 500.000 Syriac speaking Christians and thousands of Christians of different ethnicities and denominations. Our monasteries, churches, villages and houses fell prey to the systematic attempt to erase Christian life from its cradle. Today only few thousand Christians remain in Turkey, while many monasteries and churches are destroyed or confiscated.

We are writing to you because Germany, like no other state and society in the world, faced the sad truths of its history paving the way for reconciliation between peoples. When we ask for recognition, we ask for the beginning of a reconciliation process. To us, as well as to our Armenian brothers and sisters, this chapter of our history has become part of our identity. By denying this genocide, one contributes to the fulfillment of the evil plan of those who executed this genocide. Our people did not pose any threat to the Ottoman Empire. They were victimized based on racist policies and a political will to exterminate Christianity in the former Ottoman Empire in what amounts to a religio-ethnic cleansing of our people.

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SYRIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE  
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Today, as the Head of the Syriac Orthodox Church, we call upon the living consciousness of the German people not to turn a blind eye on truth, but to open their hearts to the suffering of an entire people. We also call upon you as the highest representatives of this people to show that values of democracy have to be defended and promoted globally and not selectively.

May the spirit of truth and courage guide you in your decision.

  


**Ignatius Aphrem II**  
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East  
Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church