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Zoryan Institute Writes to Turkish Prime Minister on Turkish-Armenian Dialogue

Toronto, Canada — Against the background of the 90th anniversary of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, there has been a flood of activity and articles about the Genocide and its impact on Turkish-Armenian relations today. Recently, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey wrote to Armenian President Robert Kocharyan with the suggestion of the two countries forming a joint commission of historians and other experts to study the “events of 1915,” as a prelude to normalizing relations. This suggestion has drawn the attention of such interested parties as Germany and the United States.

President Kocharyan responded that other countries on the European continent, which have disputes are still able to have open borders and diplomatic relations. He argued that it is the responsibility of governments to develop bilateral relations and it is not right to delegate that responsibility to historians. He proposed that the two countries establish normal relations and open border with one another, with no preconditions.

The Zoryan Institute, which supports all earnest efforts to promote Turkish-Armenian dialogue, and was engaged four years ago in a failed attempt at establishing a historians’ commission on this subject, has issued a public letter to Prime Minister Erdogan. The letter suggests that instead of waiting for a historians’ commission to be created, which is long, arduous and complex process, there are simple confidence-building steps that could be taken now, to bridge the divide between the two civil societies.

Attached is the full text of the letter, signed by Professor Roger W. Smith, Chairman of the Zoryan Institute’s Academic Board of Directors.

The Zoryan Institute is the first non-profit, international center devoted to the research and documentation of contemporary issues related to Armenian social, political and cultural life. To this end, the Institute conducts multidisciplinary research, publication, and educational programs dealing with Armenia, the Armenian Genocide, and Diaspora, within a universal context.