



PRESS RELEASE

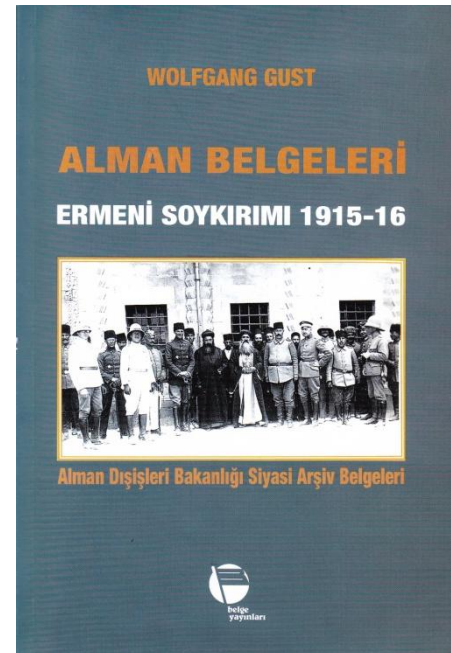
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Ragip Zarakolu, Human Rights Champion in Turkey, and Zoryan Institute Collaborate on Turkish Publication of German Foreign Office Archives

Toronto—Ragip Zarakolu, a publisher in Istanbul and a renowned champion of human rights, has collaborated with the Zoryan Institute to lay down one more building block on the foundation of a common body of knowledge for Turks and Armenians. Zarakolu, despite being in jail since October 2011 allegedly in connection with the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) trials, has not stopped his efforts to bring out the historical truth about the “events of 1915” and thereafter.

On January 12, 2012, Belge Yayınları, Zarakolu’s publishing house, released *Alman Belgeleri Ermeni Soykırımı 1915-16: Alman Dışişleri Bakanlığı Siyasi Arşiv Belgeleri*, the Turkish edition of *The Armenian Genocide 1915-16: Documents from the Political Archives of the German Foreign Office*, compiled and edited by Wolfgang Gust and published originally in Germany. The original book was the product of some ten years of devoted research, editing and translating overseen by Wolfgang and Sigrid Gust. It is an extensive selection of some 218 telegrams, letters and reports from German consular officials in the Ottoman Empire to the Foreign Office in Berlin describing the unfolding genocide of the Armenians.



In December 1915, as a response to the criticism and outrage of German officials in the field over the inhuman treatment of the Armenians, German Chancellor and Foreign Minister Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg wrote this: “The proposed public reprimand of an ally in the course of a war would be an act which is unprecedented in history. Our only aim is to keep Turkey on our side until the end of the war, no matter whether as a result Armenians do perish or not.” Imperial Germany was the political and military ally of the Ottoman Empire. The candor in these documents was possible because they were marked “confidential,” “very confidential,” or “secret” and “very secret,” being intended only for in-house use and never for public consumption. During World War I, only German diplomats and military officials could enter areas in which the genocide took place relatively unhindered and were able to send uncensored reports out of the country. Apart from the Americans, who remained neutral in the war until April 6, 1917, German diplomats and their informants from the charitable missions or from among the employees of the Baghdad Railway were the most important non-Armenian eyewitnesses of the Genocide.

It is ironic to read the report of February 24, 1913, from Ambassador in Constantinople (Wangenheim) to the Imperial Chancellor (Bethmann-Hollweg) stating, “Here in Germany, we have become accustomed to viewing the periodically repeated Armenian massacres as being merely a natural reaction to the Armenian businessmen’s system of draining others dry. The Armenians were called the Jews of the Orient, and people forgot that in Anatolia there is also a strong tribe of Armenian farmers which has all the good

characteristics of a healthy rural population and whose entire wrongdoing consists of doggedly defending its religion, its language and its property against the foreign peoples surrounding it.”

This new book is part of the long-term project, “Creating a Common Body of Knowledge.” There is a need in Turkey at this time for authoritative information on its suppressed history. The Zoryan Institute seeks to help provide information to fill this need through systematic scholarly research, the publication of incontestable information on the Armenian Genocide in Turkish and other languages, and the distribution of it widely in Turkey and other countries. Other documentary and analytical publications commissioned by the Zoryan Institute as part of the “Common Body of Knowledge” include *Hitler and the Armenian Genocide* (Belge Publishers) and *Judgment at Istanbul* (Bilgi University Press).

The translation into Turkish and publication of the German documents was very challenging and took seven years to prepare. Dealing with the diplomatic German language and Sütterlin script of the World War I era was particularly difficult, and the text of the forthcoming English language edition was helpful in clarifying many passages.



Ragip Zarakolu has been persecuted by the Turkish state for many years for his public positions on freedom of speech, human rights, and the rights of Turkey’s minorities. Outside Turkey, he has given lectures and participated in conferences—including in April 2010 in São Paulo, Brazil at a conference co-organized by Zoryan—and is highly respected by academic and human rights organizations. Among his honors, he received the NOVIB/PEN Free Expression Award in 2003 and was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by members of the Swedish Parliament in February 2012. As a result of his persecution and many court indictments, he has been officially adopted by PEN.

Commenting on the philosophy behind the “Common Body of Knowledge” project, K.M. Greg Sarkissian, president of the Zoryan Institute stated, “History is a stumbling block for peace and stability in the region. True peace can be achieved only if the nations in the region can talk to each other openly about their past. Therefore, we see education through the Common Body of Knowledge as one of the best ways to alleviate the tension between Turks and Armenians, because it provides a basis of shared knowledge that can counter generations of hostility and lead to mutual understanding and dialogue.”

The Zoryan Institute is the parent organization of the International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, which runs an annual university program on the subject in partnership with the University of Toronto, and is co-publisher of *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* in partnership with the International Association of Genocide Scholars and the University of Toronto Press. Zoryan Institute is the first non-profit, international center devoted to the research and documentation of contemporary issues with a focus on Genocide, Diaspora and Armenia. For more information please contact the Zoryan Institute by email zoryan@zoryaninstitute.org or telephone 416-250-9807.