**French Bill on Genocide Is Denounced by Turkey**

**By Sebnem Arsu and Scott Sayare, The New York Times**

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PARIS — The Turkish government and news media castigated [France](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/france/index.html?inline=nyt-geo) on Tuesday, accusing Parliament of racism and a breach of France’s own free speech principles after the French Senate passed a bill late Monday criminalizing the denial of officially recognized genocides, including the [Armenian genocide](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/turkey/armenian_genocide/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) begun in 1915.

Historians widely believe that about 1.5 million Armenians were slaughtered by Ottoman Turks during the collapse of the [Ottoman Empire](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/o/ottoman_empire/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) in what they deem the 20th century’s first genocide.

The French president, [Nicolas Sarkozy](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/s/nicolas_sarkozy/index.html?inline=nyt-per), will sign the bill into law within two weeks, an aide confirmed on Tuesday.

The bill has infuriated [Turkey](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/turkey/index.html?inline=nyt-geo), which has long maintained that Armenian deaths were far fewer in number and not the result of systematic killings. Recognizing them as genocide is criminal under Turkish law, as an insult to Turkish identity.

In a speech in Ankara, the capital, Prime Minister [Recep Tayyip Erdogan](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/e/recep_tayyip_erdogan/index.html?inline=nyt-per) said the French bill represented “evident discrimination, racism and massacre of free speech.” He reiterated Turkey’s intention to add penalties against France, though he did not specify what those sanctions might bear upon and also signaled that the government would wait to see the result of possible legal challenges to the bill in France.

“We are going to impose our sanctions step by step with certainty, without hesitations,” he said. “However, for now, we are still in the phase of patience as we watch how this process would shape up.”

After the French Senate vote on Monday night, Turkey’s ambassador to France, Tahsin Burcuoglu, suggested that Turkey might reduce diplomatic ties by calling for his “permanent departure” from Paris.

Headlines in the Turkish news media, regardless of their political affiliations, reflected the level of public frustration in Turkey.

“Arrogant French,” said Milli Gazete, a right-wing newspaper, while Cumhuriyet, a pro-leftist daily with nationalist leanings, called the bill “French Justice” in an ironic tone.

Some newspapers like Sozcu, a widely circulated daily, picked a rougher language. Sozcu likened Mr. Sarkozy to Satan, manipulating a photo of the leader with spiky ears. “French President Sarkozy Sold Out His Ally Turkey in a Devilish Plan! Denial Bill Passed the Senate. Shame on You!” the headline read.

Turkey’s government, led by the Justice and Development Party, briefly recalled Mr. Burcuoglu and suspended bilateral political and military cooperation with the French in late December, after the National Assembly, France’s lower parliamentary house, approved the bill.

The French government has sought to calm diplomatic tensions over the bill, however, concerned with preserving cooperation with Turkey on issues including the violence in Syria and the Iranian nuclear program.

“What I’d like to do today is appeal to our Turkish friends for calm,” said the French foreign minister, Alain Juppé, who had openly opposed the legislation, speaking on French television on Tuesday.

“I’m holding out my hand, and I hope it will be taken up one day.”

The Turkish government appeared uninterested.

President [Abdullah Gul](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/g/abdullah_gul/index.html?inline=nyt-per) denounced the legislation, saying, “Our bilateral relations are at a different level from now on.” The opposition Nationalist Movement Party proposed annulment of the Turkish and French friendship parliamentary committee, as party officials lashed out at the legislation, calling it unacceptable.

France’s relations with Turkey, a moderate Muslim democracy and NATO ally, have been strained in recent years as Mr. Sarkozy, along with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, repeatedly expressed opposition to Turkey’s full membership in the European Union.

The government in Ankara argues that Mr. Sarkozy’s opposition to Turkish membership, and his party’s support for the genocide bill, are aimed at appealing to the 500,000 ethnic Armenians in his country leading up to the May presidential elections.

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