



By: TA | AP Brief

Erdogan rejects Israel's Armenian genocide move and points to Gaza deaths



Turkey's president dismissed an **Israeli proposal** to designate violence against Armenians by the Ottoman Empire during World War I as genocide, and turned the accusation back at Israel by pointing at the deaths of Palestinians in Gaza.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was responding to a measure approved Sunday by Israel's Cabinet. The proposal still requires parliamentary approval and comes amid **deteriorating ties** between Israel and Turkey.

Turkey has fiercely lobbied to prevent countries from officially recognizing the mass **deaths of Armenians** around 1915 as genocide, even as Armenians have pushed for it.

Historians estimate that up to 1.5 million Armenians were killed by Ottoman Turks around the time of World War I, an event widely viewed by scholars as the first genocide of the 20th century. Turkey denies that the deaths constituted genocide, saying the toll has been inflated and that those killed were victims of civil war and unrest.

"We pay absolutely no attention to the slanders against our country by this criminal network, which has the blood of 73,000 innocent people of Gaza, mostly children and women, on its hands," Erdogan said in a televised address following a Cabinet meeting.

"Our history is free from genocide, massacres, oppression and colonialism," Erdogan said.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, whose government is engaged in efforts to normalize ties with neighboring Turkey, declined to respond to the Israeli proposal on Monday, suggesting that the issue should not be turned into a political weapon.

"We see no need to respond because we believe that refraining from entering into the issue of the weaponization of the Armenian Genocide is in the interests of the Republic of Armenia," state news agency Armenpress quoted Pashinyan as saying.

Politically motivated step

Turkey and Armenia have no formal diplomatic ties and their border has been closed since 1993. The countries have been engaged in normalization talks in recent years, however, with special envoys meeting to discuss reopening the border and restoring ties.

Israel for years avoided officially recognizing the violence as genocide out fear of angering Turkey, but that relationship has soured over the past two decades, especially as the most recent wars in Gaza, Lebanon and Iran have dragged on.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar, who introduced the proposal, said on Sunday that the "Armenian Genocide remains to this day the subject of an institutionalized campaign of denial and minimization" by the Turkish government, despite overwhelming historical evidence.

Saar noted that Israeli leaders, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, have previously described the violence against Armenians as genocide. But it has never been formally recognized in a vote by Israel's Knesset.

He noted that 32 countries, including the United States, Syria and Lebanon, have also classified the violence as genocide.

Turkey's Foreign Ministry called Israel's move a "politically motivated" step meant to distract from the country's own actions against Palestinians

Israel and Turkey were once close allies, but ties deteriorated after Erdogan, whose party is rooted in Turkey's Islamic movement, came to power.

Relations soured steadily over his outspoken criticism of Israeli policies toward Palestinians.

On Sunday, Turkey's Foreign Ministry called Israel's move a "politically motivated" step

meant to distract from the country's own actions against Palestinians and from proceedings at the **International Court of Justice** over alleged genocide in Gaza. In 2024, Turkey formally joined the ongoing case that was filed by South Africa.

Israel has faced **repeated accusations**, including from the United Nations and Turkey, that its offensive in Gaza amounts to genocide. Israel, founded in the wake of the Holocaust, denies the accusations