

**Middle
East
Studies
Association**
of North America, Inc.

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June 23, 2005

H.E. Tatoul Markarian
Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the United States
2225 R Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

By facsimile 202-319-2982

Your Excellency:

I write to you on behalf of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association of North America in order to express our grave concern about the current condition and whereabouts of Mr. Yektan Turkeyilmaz. Mr. Turkeyilmaz is a Ph. D. candidate at Duke University and has been a member in good standing of the Middle East Studies Association. Mr. Turkeyilmaz is being held by the Armenian security services at an undisclosed location in Yerevan.

The Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) comprises 2600 academics worldwide who teach and conduct research on the Middle East and North Africa, and is the preeminent professional association in the field. The association publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, and is committed to ensuring respect for the principles of academic freedom and freedom of expression in the region and in connection with the study of the Middle East and North Africa. Numbered among our members are some of the world's experts on Armenian history, culture, literature and genocide studies, and the Society for Armenian Studies is an affiliated organization.

At the time of his detention Mr. Turkeyilmaz was in Armenia conducting research on the history of Eastern Anatolia during the interwar period. He has conducted research in the country before without incident. Upon seeking to leave the country after finishing his work on this trip, he was seized on suspicion of smuggling old books and/or documents and questioned on his archival work and political beliefs. He has been held incommunicado well over 72 hours and we are unaware of any charges against him.

We ask on behalf of our organization that you use your good offices to investigate the specific issues involved and act to ensure that Mr. Turkeyilmaz is treated fairly and provided all legal rights due him. We strongly urge you, at a minimum and urgently, to obtain information about Mr. Turkeyilmaz's whereabouts and conditions of detention, and convey that information to his family. We are willing to act as a conduit for that information.

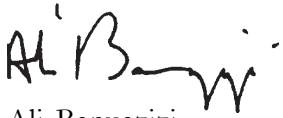
Ambassador Tatoul Markarian

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Re: Yektan Turkyilmaz

As evidence of our commitment to academic freedom, MESA recently sent a strongly worded statement to Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey decrying actions by members of his government that led to the cancellation of a conference organized by Turkish academics on the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and other events of the period 1915-1923. Our actions derive from our larger belief that scholarship, free exchange of ideas and international collegiality can help lessen political tensions between states and increase mutual respect and understanding amongst peoples. With your help, what may merely be a misunderstanding can be kept from turning into an international political issue of value to none.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ALIBANUAZIZI'.

Ali Banuazizi

President, Middle East Studies Association

Professor, Boston College