



## **Armenian National Committee of Canada Comité National Arménien du Canada**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Erdogan Criticizes Turkey's Past and Accuses the Kemalists of Ethnic Cleansing**

Ottawa – On May 23 2009, during a congress of Turkey's ruling Party (Justice and Development Party) in Duzce, Eastern Turkey, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan made an important announcement. He criticized Turkish nationalism and called the Kemalist foundation of the Republic of Turkey "fascist" because of the ethnic cleansing of the Armenian and Greek minorities. Erdogan said, "For many years Turkey has been ethnically cleansed of its minorities because of their cultural and ethnic difference vis-à-vis the Turkish identity. This was the result of fascism and we as the Justice and Development Party have been trapped in this wrong political approach and have committed similar errors".

The President of the Armenian National Committee of Canada, Dr. Girair Basmadjian considers Erdogan's announcement as an improvement in the domestic politics of Turkey after a continuous denialist politics adopted by the deep state. "Since the creation of modern Turkey, successive governments have adopted a policy of Turkification and have mistreated its minorities. Erdogan's announcement is the first made by a Prime Minister accepting Turkey's past mistakes and may be considered as a first step for an eventual apology to the Armenian population for its extermination by the Ottoman government in 1915. However we should not be too optimistic because the current Turkish government and academia includes numerous influential "fascists" and it is not clear if Erdogan's real intent is to oppose them. Only a few months ago Professor Turkaya Ataov delivered a "fascist" speech calling the West racist and denying the Armenian Genocide".

Finally, the Turkish public is faced with an unprecedented choice to decide which version of history leads to its future, is it the version adopted by the deep state, people like Ataov and prosecutors who deny the events of 1915 and try to mislead their own people by penalizing the open discussion of the Armenian Genocide with the adoption of article 301 of the penal code? Or the true version that Erdogan referred to that leads to a peaceful coexistence with neighbours and regional actors and brings Turkey closer to democratic Europe? Only time will show if the true version will finally succeed to lead Turkey to European integration, however if the version adopted by the deep state prevails, Turkey risks its isolation in the eyes of Europe and the international community.

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The ANCC is the largest and the most influential Canadian-Armenian grassroots political organization. Working in coordination with a network of offices, chapters, and supporters throughout Canada and affiliated organizations around the world, the ANCC actively advances the concerns of the Canadian-Armenian community on a broad range of issues.

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Le CNAC est l'organisation politique canadienne-arménienne la plus large et influente. Collaborant avec une série de bureaux, chapitres et souteneurs à travers le Canada et des organisations affiliées à travers le monde, le CNAC s'occupe activement des inquiétudes de la communauté canadienne-arménienne.

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