

# Bonner Querschnitte

*Bonn Profiles – Press Reports*

Phone: +49 / 4106 / 804806; Fax: +49 / 4106 / 804807

E-Mail: [bq@bucer.de](mailto:bq@bucer.de); <http://www.bucer.org/bq.html>

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## **BQ 354 – No. 18/2015**

### **WEA Secretary General Sends Open Letter to Orthodox and Old Oriental Churches and Christians in 100-years Commemoration of the Genocide of 1915**

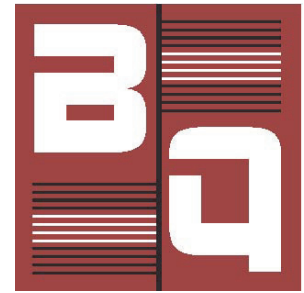
(New York/Bonn – April 23, 2015) World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) Secretary General Bp Efraim Tendero sent an open letter to Orthodox and Old Oriental church leaders and Christians, affirming that WEA's constituency of some 600 million evangelicals will join the global 100-years commemoration of the genocide of the Armenian people that began on April 24 in 1915. He also related it to the current situation of many Christians in the Middle East who suffer persecution today and said that WEA will continue to pray, engage and make their sufferings known.

“Even as we mourn the persecution of many non-Christian minorities in Iraq, Syria, and in neighboring countries, and even as we weep over the many atrocities in the shadow of civil war, we especially suffer with the leadership and the members of the Old Oriental and Eastern Churches throughout the Middle East. We know you are now experiencing a new edition of genocide,” Bp Tendero said, adding that: “Ideologically, the horrors of the Middle East which are taking place before our eyes, are a repetition of the genocides 100 years ago.”

He affirmed that “the World Evangelical Alliance is actively engaged globally on behalf of religious freedom and against the persecution of Christians. A particular focus for us is the discrimination and persecution of the Old Oriental and Eastern Churches. We do this through public prayer, research, publications, and by influencing church leaders, the media, and politicians. We try to make their sufferings known to everyone and to cause decision makers in their different spheres to respond in justice and mercy.”



View of the debate on the Armenian genocide of 1915 in the German parliament from the VIP stand, on the left of the Syrian-Orthodox archbishop Simon Jacob and Thomas Schirmacher (bald) of the Central Council of Oriental Christians in Germany (© Warnecke/IIRF)



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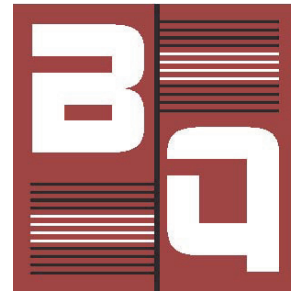
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**Text & Technology:**

Titus Vogt (ViSdP)  
Vorderer Kamp 52a, D-25479 Ellerau  
Phone: +49 / 4106 / 80 48 06  
Fax: +49 / 4106 / 80 48 07  
E-Mail: [Titus.Vogt@bucer.de](mailto:Titus.Vogt@bucer.de)

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Parallel to the open letter, WEA's [International Institute for Religious Freedom](#), who's director Thomas Schirmacher drafted the Open letter, published a statement on why Turkey's attempts to deny the genocide are faulty ([100 Years of Genocide: 10 Reasons Why the Turkish Government Is Mistaken](#)), a [Report on the Discrimination of Armenians in Turkey Today](#) and a report on the situation of Evangelical Christians in Turkey by the Turkish Evangelical Alliance ([IIRF Reports 2015/1](#)).

### The full open letter reads:

Dear Patriarchs, Metropolitans, Bishops, and fellow Christians,

On 24 April 2015 Christians from around the world will commemorate the day 100 years ago, when the genocide of the Armenian people began in their homeland with the mass arrests of Armenian intellectuals. This global commemoration includes the 600 million Protestants who work together in the World Evangelical Alliance.

In the same breath, in addition to the 1.5 million Armenians who died, we remember the other victims of the parallel ethnic cleansings which occurred in strongly Christian regions of the former Ottoman Empire. These atrocities claimed the lives of an estimated 300,000 Pontic Greeks and 300,000 Aramaic-speaking Christians (Arameans, Assyrians, Chaldo-Assyrians, and Christian Syrians). The tragic genocides dragged on for almost ten years.

We welcome the fact that international researchers have investigated the Armenian genocide in depth. We call on Turkey to now open its archives from the period of the First World War, as well as from the Turkish trials of the main participants in the genocide, for historians from around the world.

We very much regret that genocide research in relation to the Syro-Aramaic people and the Pontic Greeks is still in its infancy. Neither of their fates have been well researched in the last 50 years, yet we hope the worldwide commemoration this year may prompt the interest to satisfy this need. The stories of these people must be told.

We turn to the hundreds of thousands of Oriental Christians, now in Western countries, who fled their homelands in large numbers because of persecution, and who are presently well integrated for the good of their new countries. We know that you are out of sight to the media and to



March after the central ecumenical memorial service in Berlin Cathedral, center (on the banner: "Völkermord" = genocide), center Cem Özdemir, chair of the green party, and Thomas Schirmacher

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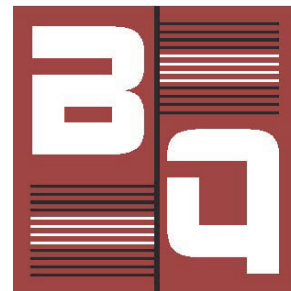
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politicians because of your peacefulness and democratic spirit, both of which are evident in comparison to other immigrants from your regions. So that you know: We are on your side, both in our memory as well as in the present situation, where many are waiting in horror for news of their relatives in the Middle East.

Even as we mourn the persecution of many non-Christian minorities in Iraq, Syria, and in neighboring countries, and even as we weep over the many atrocities in the shadow of civil war, we especially suffer with the leadership and the members of the Old Oriental and Eastern Churches throughout the Middle East. We know you are now experiencing a new edition of genocide; this is especially true of the Syro-Arameans.

Ideologically, the horrors of the Middle East which are taking place before our eyes, are a repetition of the genocides 100 years ago.

The World Evangelical Alliance is actively engaged globally on behalf of religious freedom and against the persecution of Christians. A particular focus for us is the



Thomas Schirmmacher with representatives of the Syrian-Orthodox and the Coptic Church in Berlin Cathedral at the central ecumenical memorial service "100 years of genocide"

discrimination and persecution of the Old Oriental and Eastern Churches. We do this through public prayer, research, publications, and by influencing church leaders, the media, and politicians. We try to make their sufferings known to everyone and to cause decision makers in their different spheres to respond in justice and mercy.

Sincerely,

*Bp Efraim Tendero  
Secretary General.  
World Evangelical Alliance*

### MEDIA CONTACT:

Timothy K. Goropevsek, [timothyg@worldea.org](mailto:timothyg@worldea.org), +1 212.233.3046 x149

*Over two billion Christians in the world today are represented by three world church bodies. The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) is one of those, serving and representing more than 600 million evangelicals. Launched in 1846 to unite evangelicals worldwide, the WEA continues to be a dynamic movement with 7 regional and 129 national Evangelical Alliances, and over 150 member organizations. WEA's mission is to speak as a trusted voice, to equip members and leaders for global impact and to connect its members and others for common action in the furtherance of God's reign. For more info e-mail at [wea@worldea.org](mailto:wea@worldea.org) or go to [Worldea.org](http://Worldea.org).*

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- [Photo 1](#): View of the debate on the Armenian genocide of 1915 in the German parliament from the VIP stand, on the left of the Syrian-Orthodox archbishop Simon Jacob and Thomas Schirmmacher (bald) of the Central Council of Oriental Christians in Germany (© Warnecke/IIRF)
- [Photo 2](#): March after the central ecumenical memorial service in Berlin Cathedral, center (on the banner: "Völkermord" = genocide), center Cem Özdemir, chair of the green party, and Thomas Schirmmacher
- [Photo 3](#): Thomas Schirmmacher with representatives of the Syrian-Orthodox and the Coptic Church in Berlin Cathedral at the central ecumenical memorial service "100 years of genocide"
- IIRF-Report 2015/2: The Armenian Question in Turkey's Domestic and International Policy ([pdf](#))
- IIRF-Report 2015/1: 2014 Human Rights Violations Report by the Association of Protestant Churches (Turkey) ([pdf](#))
- BQ 352: 100 Years of Genocide: 10 Reasons Why the Turkish Government Is Mistaken ([pdf](#))

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E-Mail: [Titus.Vogt@bucer.de](mailto:Titus.Vogt@bucer.de)