

## **Proposed UK public lines on the Armenian massacres**

### **Does the UK Government recognise the events of 1915-1917 as genocide?**

The terrible suffering that was inflicted on Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century cannot be forgotten. The massacres and crimes that were committed were rightly and robustly condemned by the British government of the day. While we remember the victims of the past, our priority today should be to promote reconciliation between the peoples and Governments of Turkey and Armenia. That is the best way to ensure a peaceful and secure future for everyone living in the region.

### **Response to publication of Geoffrey Robertson's opinion "Was there an Armenian genocide?"**

We have read and noted Geoffrey Robertson's report. While this is a useful document, it is an opinion and not a legal judgement. HMG's position on the terrible massacres that occurred in Ottoman Turkey in 1915-17 remains unchanged.

If pressed: Geoffrey Robertson concluded that while the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide could not be applied retrospectively, the term genocide should be applied to the Armenian massacres. We disagree. Genocide is a precise term and its use is best assessed by a competent court. However, there is no court with the authority to make such an assessment. Therefore, it is inappropriate for the British Government to apply the term to events on which no legal judgment can be made.

### **Response to Geoffrey Robertson's opinion that Parliament has been misled**

#### **Have UK officials misled Ministers, who have in turn misled Parliament?**

We do not agree with Mr Robertson's suggestion that officials have misled Ministers who have in turn misled Parliament. Ministers are responsible for the statements they make to Parliament.

### **Armenian – Turkish relations**

Although the process of ratifying the Protocols signed in October 2009 has been suspended, Turkey and Armenia have taken significant steps in recent years towards normalising their relations. The UK Government supports this movement towards reconciliation and encourages both sides to continue to work towards normalisation.