

A century of denial is much too long

1915 Armenian genocide still not recognized by U.S., Turkey

LAST WEEK was bad for Holocaust deniers. Oskar Groening, the "accountant of Auschwitz," testified he had personally seen up to 1.5 million Jews "murdered in Auschwitz. I was there," he said.

Elsewhere, Thursday marked the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, carried out against Armenians (Christians) by someone.

Who?

Turkey (Muslims) will get mad if I say. Earlier this month, Pope Francis rattled Turkey's cage when he called the slaughter "the first genocide of the 20th century." Turkey promptly called in and dressed down the Vatican ambassador.

Although the Holocaust still has dead-end deniers, they are the lunatic fringe. There are Armenian genocide deniers, too, but most historians, including scholars of mass killing, agree that it happened:

"On April 24, 1915, under cover of World War I, the Young Turk government of the Ottoman Empire began a systematic, well-planned and organized genocide of its Armenian citizens," the International Association of Genocide Scholars wrote in a 2006 open letter.

"More than a million Armenians were exterminated through direct killing, starvation, torture, and forced death marches. The rest of the Armenian population fled into permanent exile."

Although the slaughter was reported at the time, it quickly sank beneath the waves of other reporting on the First World War.

While Armenians have been



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campaigning for the simple facts to be acknowledged, the world has been slow to open its eyes and its moral conscience, perhaps because of Turkey's strategic importance.

For almost a century, Turkey had ferociously repudiated genocide claims, saying that it didn't happen, or if it did, that the numbers were small or that it was wartime collateral damage or that David Copperfield vanished them.

Only about 20 countries — including Canada, France and Russia — officially acknowledge it. The United States does not.

That infuriates Andrew Kevorkian, a Philadelphia public-relations man of Armenian descent.

During the 2008 campaign, Barack Obama said "he was going to formally recognize the Armenian genocide," says Kevorkian.

But he has not. There was hope, but no change.

"I'm sorry I voted for him the first time and haven't since," says Kevorkian.

It's not over for the Armenian community.

"We're just going to be coming back year after year. We are not planning on letting go," says Kim Yacoubian, Philadelphia co-chairwoman of the Committee for the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide. There are about 10,000 Ar-



Protesters stage a 100-minute silent sit-in at LOVE Park on Friday to mark 100 years since the genocide of Armenians at the hands of the Ottoman Empire during World War I.

menians in the Delaware Valley.

To mark the sad centennial, in addition to marches, remembrance services and full-page ads in the *Inquirer*, the local committee put up a billboard on Interstate 76 and an anonymous donor put up several on Interstate 95 from New Jersey to Delaware.

One mentions "100 years of denial," another states, "1,500,000 Armenians murdered," but neither mentions Turkey.

Yacoubian said that "motorists only have seconds to read it and those were the key messages we wanted to convey." The *Inquirer* ads did not mention Turkey, either, to stay within company guidelines.

"As Americans, we're looking for recognition from the U.S. government as well as the Turkish government," Yacoubian tells me.

"Once recognition takes place, the natural course of action after that would be reparations," she says, maybe putting her finger on one reason Turkey is reluctant to face the music.

Turkish writer Taner Akcam called the genocide the "collective secret of Turkish society" and it has been "relegated to the black hole of our collective memory." They don't want to know.

After 100 years of being ignored, the Armenian diaspora is gaining traction.

One of these days, the United States may decide it's OK if the bitter truth ruffles feathers of our semi-ally Turkey.

It's wishful thinking to hope for an about-face — Turkey still pulls its ambassador whenever the "G-word" comes up — but Ankara may be smelling the coffee.

To mark the centennial, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan sent a message to the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul expressing his condolences to the families of those "who lost their lives under the conditions of the World War I." He added, "We are cognizant of the sorrowful events experienced in the past by the Armenian community."

It was welcome, but dodged the reality of the genocide, just as the American president did.

If I were Armenian, I would be saying "never again," but also "not enough."

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Hart plans to make his bout memorable

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JESSE HART always figured that by the time he became a pro boxer, Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao would be retired.

He was wrong.



Hart

Hart (16-0, 13 KOs), who grew up in North Philadelphia at 28th and Berks, takes on Chicago's Mike Jimenez (17-0, 11 KOs) in a scheduled 10-round bout for the vacant USBA super middleweight title.

It will be Hart's second bout on the undercard of fellow Top Rank fighter Pacquiao. Hart made his pro debut, a first-round TKO of

Manuel Eastman, in Ju the card headlined by split-decision loss to Tiedley, also at the MGM C

"I never dreamed of a card of this magnitude 25, said during yesterday's workout at Joe Hand Bo in Northern Liberties. Floyd Mayweather and Pacquiao would be retired got in the game ... I never thought I would have the chance to perform in a ring as them.

"D & D Management made it happen."

Hart's brother Danny was shot and killed in 2011 ways telling his younger that he'd be up there weather at some point in reer. And while Hart is yet, this is a pretty cool stone for him in his young "This is the stage he would be going for," Har his brother. "This fight is ed to him."

The fight, which isn't se to be a part of the mega view telecast, is being b "Someone's 0 Must Go."

But Hart, who had a de amateur career before

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