



The Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology
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Denial of Violence:

Ottoman Past, Turkish Present and the Collective Violence against the Armenians, 1789-2009

by

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Abstract:

While much of the international community regards the forced deportation of Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire in 1915, where approximately 800,000 to 1.5 million Armenians perished, as genocide, the Turkish state continues to officially deny it, insisting instead that what occurred took place during war and that the losses on their side were just as great. In this talk based on my recently published book, I delve into the roots of this denial and explain why it still persists. I specifically focus on the denial of collective violence committed against Armenians throughout Ottoman and Turkish history, demonstrating its occurrence many times before 1915. To capture the negotiation of meaning that leads to denial, I qualitatively analyze 315 memoirs published in Turkey from 1789 to 2009 in addition to numerous secondary sources, journals, and newspapers. My analysis reveals that denial is a multi-layered, historical process with four distinct yet overlapping components: the structural elements of collective violence and modernity on one side, and the emotional elements of collective consensus and legitimating events on the other. In the Turkish case, denial emerged through four stages, beginning with the imperial denial of the origins of collective violence committed against Armenians that commenced in 1789 and continued until 1907, followed by the Young Turk denial of violence lasting for a decade from 1908 to 1918, then an early republican denial taking place from 1919 to 1973, and culminating with the late republican denial of the responsibility for the collective violence started in 1974, which continues to this day.

Born, raised and educated in Istanbul, Turkey, **Fatma Müge Göçek** is a Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her research focuses on the comparative analysis of history, politics, gender and collective violence. Her published works include *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the 18th Century* (Oxford University Press, 1987), *Reconstructing Gender in the Middle East: Tradition, Identity, Power* (Columbia University Press, 1994 co-edited with Shiva Balaghi), *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change* (Oxford University Press, 1996), *Political Cartoons in the Middle East* (Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998), *Social Constructions of Nationalism in the Middle East* (SUNY Press, 2002), *The Transformation of Turkey: Redefining State and Society from the Ottoman Empire to the Modern Era* (I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2011), and *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2011 co-edited with Ronald Grigor Suny and Norman Naimark). Her last book entitled *Denial of Violence: Ottoman Past, Turkish Present and the Collective Violence against the Armenians, 1789-2009* came out in November 2014 from Oxford University Press. The book received the American Sociological Association Best Book Award in 2015 (Sociology of Culture section).

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Venue: CEU, POPPER Room