

WRITTEN QUESTION E-6345/08
by Margaritis Schinas (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Provocative utterances by the Turkish Minister for National Defence

Greek and Turkish newspaper articles today report on observations by the Turkish Minister for National Defence, Mr Vecdi Gönül, at a ceremony held at the Turkish Embassy in Brussels to mark the anniversary of the death of Kamel Atatürk, concerning the need for the expulsion of millions of Pontic Greek and Armenians after the fall of the Ottoman Empire so as to form a modern Turkish state. Specifically Mr Gönül asked 'would Turkey be a nation-state if the Greeks had remained in the Aegean territories and the Armenians elsewhere in Turkey'?

Given that Turkey is a candidate for EU membership, when will the Commission lodge an official protest at these provocative utterances by the Turkish Minister for National Defence concerning the need for the genocide of Pontic Greeks and Armenians, particularly in view of the fact that the millions of European descendants of the victims can only feel slighted at this affront to the historic memory of their family forebears.

Were any Commissioners or Commission officials present at the ceremony and what was their response to these provocative utterances?

Does the Commission consider that these comments made one week after publication of the Commission's progress report on Turkey, deliberately timed to ensure that they could not be taken into account in the Commission's assessment?