

albeit tragic history, and a national sense of belonging to a homeland, albeit lost and imaginary. National aspiration coupled with a sense of belonging and a wealth of historical knowledge offered to the Diasporan generations have therefore been the cement holding the members of the Armenian communities in the Diaspora together and shaping their identity.

The ethnic identity of Armenians in Turkey, on the other hand, has been shaped by the discrimination and prejudice that has kept Christian and Islamized Armenians alike separated from mainstream Turkish society. Had Islamized families been accepted wholeheartedly within the Turkish or the Kurdish societies, they would have easily assimilated, with no distinguishing trait to set them apart. They would have become one with the “other,” whose names and surnames, language, religion, customs, and mores they had already adopted. With the inhibition against transmitting the memories of their past imposed upon the elders, historical memory was also cut off with no role in the making of the survivor generation’s identity. The existence of such Turks—formerly Armenians—in great numbers is a very strong possibility that should not be ruled out. But Turkish hostility against even Islamized Armenians never stopped and was unleashed on every occasion, spreading waves of terror and persecution. Armenians were *gâvurs* and the generations born to them *gâvur oğlu gâvur*. Worse than that, Armenians who lived in Turkey were considered “sword leftovers” (Çetin, p.