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DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

Statement

**On the recent attacks on the vulnerable group of the Armenian community in
Istanbul, Turkey**

**delivered by Ambassador Arman Kirakossian at the 939th Meeting of the OSCE
Permanent Council
January 31, 2013**

Mr. Chairperson,

My delegation expresses its concern over the series of recent attacks on the persons of the Armenian origin in Istanbul, Turkey.

In the last two months, five attacks, one of them fatal, took place in Samatya, an area historically inhabited by Armenians in Istanbul. The target of attacks is a certain group of person namely elderly Armenian women, citizens of Turkey.

There is a strong indication that the attacks could have been racially motivated taking into account their consistency and brutality towards particular group of person as well as circumstances of the perpetrated crimes.

On December 28, Marissa Kucuk, an 85 years old woman was found stabbed to death at her place. A cross had been carved on her body.

Another Armenian woman was attacked on her way to the Church on January 6th, the Armenian Christmas Day.

The latest crimes occurred on January 22 and 23 when other elderly women were attacked and beaten and one of them was severely wounded and as a result lost her eye.

We are encouraged by the prompt reaction of the Turkish civil society who recently organized the rallies and showed support to their Armenian countrymen.

Unfortunately, the strong reaction is still lacking from the Turkish authorities. The Istanbul governor quickly dismissed any racial motivation of those crimes suggesting that the reasons standing are ordinary ones and linked with robbery.

The result of these unrevealed crimes is a climate of fear and anxiety among the Armenian community.

Exactly one year ago, my delegation raised certain concerns over the case of Hrand Dink, a prominent Turkish Armenian intellectual, who was killed by ultranationalist group for advocating the cause of Armenian-Turkish reconciliation based on recognizing and addressing past grievances.

Unfortunately, since then no any positive development was registered in revealing organizers of this hate crime and addressing the climate of fear and impunity.

Moreover, certain personalities who were responsible for stigmatizing Hrand Dink were promoted. Among them is the newly appointed Head of the Ombudsman Institution of Turkey Mehmat Nihat Omeroglu, who in his former capacity of judge upheld a conviction of Mr Dink for “insulting Turkishness” by invoking a controversial 301 article of the Penal Code.

It should be recalled here that in 2010 the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Turkey's Court of Cassation's decision to uphold Dink's conviction for "insulting Turkishness" had constituted a restriction on his free speech since his writings neither incited hatred nor violence. The European Court of Human Rights also ruled that the Turkish authorities had not only failed to uphold his right to free speech, but had failed to protect his life despite repeated and detailed intelligence reports about plans to assassinate him.

On the other case of murder, namely assassination of the Turkish conscript of the Armenian origin Sevag Balykchi the military trial is still ongoing and we sincerely

hope that it will clearly reveal the motives and circumstances of this crime and provide justice. The very date of crime, April 24, provides solid ground to qualify this as yet another hate crime against Armenians in Turkey.

The protection of minorities and issues of the tolerance and non-discrimination is a priority of our Organization and we took note of Turkey's intentions to address them through implementing and developing new commitments.

Therefore, we call on the Turkish authorities to carry out a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into series of attacks targeting vulnerable groups of the Armenian community in Turkey and we will remain seized on the matter.

Thank you.