

# SWEDISH FM SOUGHT TO STOP COMMEMORATION OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE TO PLEASE ERDOGAN

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Group leaders from the governing coalition's parties were asked by the foreign ministry to consider canceling the commemoration event, since it could potentially harm Sweden's prospects of joining NATO.

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Amid [stalled](#) NATO accession talks—and in an apparent effort to avoid upsetting Turkey more than it already has—the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led by Tobias Billström (M), is said to have exerted pressure on the Swedish-Armenian friendship group in the Riksdag, asking senior government officials in private to [cancel](#) this year's annual commemoration of the Armenian Genocide.

Sweden Democrat MP Björn Söder, the chairman of the Swedish-Armenian friendship group, says that group leaders from each party in the coalition government—the Moderates, the Sweden Democrats, and the Christian Democrats—were asked by the foreign ministry to consider canceling the commemoration event since it could potentially harm Sweden's prospects of joining NATO, Samnytt [reports](#).

"We have been asked internally in our parties not to hold a celebration in the Riksdag this year," Söder told the Stockholm-based newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* (SvD).

"This is something that we have drawn attention to annually. I think it is a little bit like spitting in the faces of the survivors of the genocide not to hold the memorial service," Söder [added](#).

Left Party MP Håkan Svenneling has also leveled harsh criticism against the foreign ministry's actions. "It is important to hold the commemoration of a large-scale genocide. Erdogan should not be allowed to decide what happens in Sweden's Riksdag," Svenneling said.

"This genocide, like other genocides, is recognized annually in the Riksdag," he continued, adding that he believed the canceled commemoration "would have passed by unnoticed if no one had raised the issue and made a thing out of it."

Addressing the issue, Foreign Minister Tobias Billström (M), for his part, told SvD:

*There is no doubt that terrible abuses were committed against the Armenian ethnic group and other minorities in the crumbling Ottoman Empire. But only governments in a few countries have publicly taken a stand on the issue and recognize the genocide, and Sweden is not one of them.*

It's worth noting that in 2010, a majority of Swedish lawmakers serving in the Riksdag voted in favor of recognizing the genocide of Armenians that occurred in 1915. Despite the vote, however, neither Moderate nor Social Democrat-led governments enshrined the Riksdag's decision.

This year's commemoration is set to take place on April 26th, with the Armenian ambassador scheduled to speak. At this point, the Swedish-Armenian friendship group has not yet made a definitive decision as to whether the memorial service will be canceled.