

to old buildings falling apart. Yalçın too attests to that (pp. 223–6). Information on Istanbul Armenians and the state of Armenian church and school properties is more or less out in the open today, and the outside world is aware of their difficulties.¹⁹ It is important to note that Yalçın, a Turkish individual, acknowledges the wrongdoing and condemns it.

Indeed, successive governments' intolerant policies toward religious and ethnic minorities in Turkey were echoed in the 1934 decree to Turkify non-Turkish surnames, a powerful strategy of Turkifying and homogenizing the diverse society. With this decree, even their name was denied to Armenians who could claim Armenianness by a name that related to their

¹⁹ The General Directorate for Foundations regulates all non-Muslim religious properties and activities. In 1936, the government required that all religious foundations declare their assets. Then in 1974, as political tension over Cyprus was rising, the government banned these foundations from buying property and confiscated what they had acquired after 1936. The law was amended in 2002, but the government still holds the right to take possession of properties in places where the non-Muslim population has dropped significantly. For this and other restrictions on religious minorities and violations of religious freedom, see USDOS BDHRL, "Turkey" (2007).

For a detailed account of the state of non-Muslim community foundations in Turkey and government policies jeopardizing their existence or the return of property to their owners, see Talin Suciyan, "Treatment of Foundations in Turkey Threatens the Survival of Non-Muslim Communities," *Armenian Reporter* (December 1, 2007, p. A3). See also Etyen Mahçupyan, "Discrimination Against Foundations Becomes Law," *Today's Zaman* (December 7, 2007). Mahçupyan writes about Foundations Law No. 5555 which was adopted by the Turkish parliament on November 9, 2006, but vetoed by then-president Ahmet Necdet Sezer, or, as the article puts it, returned to parliament for further review.