

## France's Armenian genocide law

**In January 2012, the French Senate approved a law criminalising the denial of any genocide recognised by the state, writes Clementine de Montjoye.**

On the 23 January 2012, the French Senate approved a law criminalising the denial of any genocide recognised by the state. Such a law had [already been passed](#) in France in 1990 regarding the Holocaust. However, this would now also apply to the fate of the Armenians in 1915, since France [officially recognised](#) those events as genocide in 2001. The bill made two amendments to the original Holocaust denial law. Firstly, it encompassed the protection of the honour of any victim of genocide, war crime, crimes against humanity and crimes of collaboration with the enemy. It criminalised not just the praise of war crimes committed, but also the minimisation and contestation of the existence of genocides. Secondly, it allowed memorial associations to legally defend the honour of any citizen victim of war crime and crime against humanity, as well as the original victims amongst the resistance and the deported. The maximum penalty was a €45,000 fine and up to a year in prison.

[An attempt was made](#) in the National Assembly [to get rid of this article](#) in December 2011 and was rejected. Those supporting the law argued that since these massacres are recognised by the state, they are incontestable truths. They should not simply be left for historians to debate but should become a part of the political realm. However, on 28 February 2012, [the law was declared anti-constitutional](#) by the Constitutional court. Seventy deputies of all different political parties, including Sarkozy's own UMP, supported this decision. The law was considered an attack on free speech, and deputies argued that historical truth could not be established by law.

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