

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Ambassador-Designate Marie L. Yovanovitch by
Senator Barack Obama (#1)
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 19, 2008**

Nearly 2 million Armenians were deported during the Armenian Genocide, which was carried out by the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1923, and approximately 1.5 million of those deported were killed. It is imperative that we recognize the horrific acts carried out against the Armenian people as genocide. The occurrence of the Armenian genocide is a widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming collection of historical evidence. I was deeply disturbed two years ago when the U.S. Ambassador to Armenia was fired after he used the term "genocide" to describe the mass slaughter of Armenians. I called for Secretary Rice to closely examine what I believe is an untenable position taken by the U.S. government. I ask that you respond to the following questions:

Question:

How do you characterize the events surrounding the Armenian genocide?

Answer:

The U.S. Government acknowledges and mourns the mass killings, ethnic cleansing, and forced deportations that devastated over one and a half million Armenians at the end of the Ottoman Empire. The United States recognizes these events as one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century, the "Medz Yeghern," or Great Calamity, as many Armenians refer to it.

That is why every April the President honors the victims and expresses American solidarity with the Armenian people on Remembrance Day. As the child of refugees -- at a different time and place -- I do feel very strongly about the great suffering experienced by the Armenian people both at that time and today as they remember this dark chapter in their history. I too mourn the loss of so many innocent lives and fully respect that the Armenian-American community and the Armenian people want their pain and loss to be acknowledged.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Ambassador-Designate Marie L. Yovanovitch by
Senator Barack Obama (#2)
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 19, 2008**

Question:

If confirmed, what actions will you take to remember the victims of the Armenian Genocide?

Answer:

If confirmed, I will continue the tradition of participating in the official memorial event held in Yerevan every April. I will refer to this great historic catastrophe as the “Medz Yeghern,” the term often used within Armenia to refer to that dark chapter of history. If confirmed, I also would make it a priority to promote understanding and reconciliation between the peoples and governments of Armenia and Turkey. It is important for the U.S. to do everything that it can to encourage dialogue between Armenia and Turkey, and to encourage Turkey in particular to examine the terrible events of that time openly. This was a tragedy that we and the world must never forget, so that it is never repeated.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Ambassador–Designate Marie L. Yovanovitch by
Senator Barack Obama (#3)
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 20, 2008

Question:

What steps is the State Department taking to encourage greater study and recognition of the Armenian Genocide in Turkey?

Answer:

The U.S. Embassy in Ankara is committed to working with the Government of Turkey on ways in which the atrocities of 1915 can be studied. As a recent example, the Administration is currently laying the groundwork for an International Visitor Program that would bring archivists from the Turkish State Archives to the U.S. to look at the ways in which we do historical research. As a confidence building measure, the USG has contacted Armenian archivists to participate in the program, in the hope that, upon return, the archivists from both countries could work together on a joint program that would study the issue.

In addition, our Embassies take every opportunity in meetings with the Governments of Armenia and Turkey, and with civil society leaders from both countries, to encourage improved dialogue between

them. Since 2006, the USG has provided over \$700,000 in support of initiatives to increase people-to-people connections between Armenia and Turkey, including research projects, conferences, documentary production, and exchange and partnership programs with the goal of increasing cross-border dialogue and cooperation. These programs are focused on bringing together Armenian and Turkish NGOs, think tank researchers, academics and business leaders at the grass roots level by creating opportunities for them to work together on common projects that will benefit both countries.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Ambassador – Designate Marie Yovanovitch by
Senator Barack Obama (#4)
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 20, 2008

Question:

How will you work with your counterparts in Ankara to decriminalize discussion of the Armenian Genocide in Turkey? Is the Department satisfied with recent modifications to Article 301 of Turkey's Criminal Code that allowed individuals such as Hrant Dink to be prosecuted for speaking about the Genocide? Why or why not?

Answer:

The Administration has made clear to the Turkish authorities on many occasions that such prosecutions violate free expression, run counter to Turkey's aspiration to join the European Union, and undercut Turkey's strategic significance as an example of a secular democracy that can inspire reform throughout the broader Middle East and Central Asia. The scope for free expression in Turkey, including on the Armenian issue, has expanded significantly in recent years, but clearly there is much more to be done. In May 2008, Turkey amended Article 301 of its Penal Code, under which individuals have been prosecuted for "insulting Turkishness." While the Administration would have preferred to have seen the repeal of Article 301, the

amendments reduce the maximum possible sentence from three to two years and, most importantly, require the Minister of Justice to determine whether to accept the case for prosecution. The Minister's role should help to reduce significantly the number of cases brought by zealous prosecutors. The Administration has encouraged the Turkish authorities to continue this progress and to end legal action against citizens for expressing their views.