

The Armenian Genocide Resolution | H.Res.296 + S.Res.150

This bipartisan legislation, locking in permanent U.S. recognition of the Armenian Genocide, represents America's answer to Turkey's longstanding gag-rule against ongoing, honest U.S. commemoration of this crime.

Since 1981, successive U.S. administrations, bowing to Turkish threats, have outsourced U.S. policy on the Armenian Genocide to Ankara. As a result, historically accurate references have been stripped from annual April 24th White House statements, the State Department has opposed multiple Congressional resolutions marking this crime, and the right of Americans to seek redress for genocide-era legal claims has been materially hindered.

No nation, particularly one as hostile as Erdogan's Turkey, deserves a veto over U.S. human rights policy. It is time to end Ankara's gag-rule.

Twelve reasons to pass the Armenian Genocide Resolution:

To Affirm the U.S. Record:

-- The U.S. has recognized the Armenian Genocide via President Reagan's Proclamation No. 4838, on April 22, 1981, the Eisenhower Administration statement to the International Court of Justice on the Genocide Convention on May 28, 1951, and resolutions of the U.S. House - H.J.Res.148 (1975) and H.J.Res. 247 (1984).

-- Forty-nine U.S. states have recognized the Armenian Genocide, as have a dozen of our NATO allies and the International Association of Genocide Scholars.

To Reject Foreign Manipulation:

-- Turkey has threatened to stop buying U.S. arms in response to U.S. recognition of the Armenian Genocide, yet is buying S-400 anti-aircraft missiles from Russia, a nation that has recognized this crime.

-- Ankara typically throws a short diplomatic fit, temporarily recalls its ambassador, and then, soon thereafter, resumes business-as-usual with countries that recognize the Armenian Genocide.

- OECD figures show that Turkish trade with the dozens of nations that have recognized the Armenian Genocide actually increased.
- Erdogan will not respect America as long as we obediently enforce his gag-rule against honest remembrance of the Armenian Genocide.
- Erdogan revels in the high-profile spectacle of vetoing U.S. human rights policy.

To Align U.S. Policy with American Values:

- As Americans, we should never outsource our nation's foreign policy to Turkey or to any other nation.
- We are at our strongest when we speak with honesty and integrity on matters of genocide and human rights.
- We should never let foreign nations set U.S. human rights policy.
- Our government should never allow Turkey to associate the American people with the denial of a known case of genocide.

To Strengthen U.S. Credibility:

- Honest American remembrance of the Armenian Genocide will boost U.S. credibility in preventing new atrocities around the world.
- Sadly, American global leadership on human rights and atrocities prevention is compromised when we allow a foreign country to publicly bully us into silence on a known case of genocide.
- Allowing Turkey to silence us may avoid a short-term Turkish temper tantrum, but, over the longer term, U.S. interests suffer when we allow others to enforce their gag-rules on America.

To Help Prevent Future Atrocities:

- Turkey's denial of the Armenian Genocide has set a dangerous precedent that has made future genocides more likely.

-- Adolf Hitler, before invading Poland, silenced reservations voiced by his generals by asking: "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"

-- The father of the UN Genocide Convention, Raphael Lemkin, in explaining why he coined the word "genocide," specifically cited Ottoman Turkey's intentional and systematic destruction of the Armenian people.

To Respect American History:

-- We should honor the major humanitarian role played by the United States in saving hundreds of thousands of survivors of the Armenian Genocide, largely through the Congressionally-mandated Near East Relief foundation.

-- Respecting America's humanitarian spirit requires standing up against Turkey's efforts to erase this proud chapter in our history.

To Stop Outsourcing U.S. Policy:

-- Armenian Genocide denial is Turkish policy exported to the United States, through lobbyists and PR firms that Ankara pays millions of dollars a year.

-- Turkey pressures Washington, DC because it knows that honest U.S. acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide will eventually make its own denials of this crime untenable.

To Promote Regional Stability:

-- A decision by Turkey to reckon honestly and responsibly with the Armenian Genocide has the potential to reduce a source of ongoing regional tension.

-- Turkey's acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide can pave the way to improved Armenian-Turkish relations, a U.S. regional priority.

To Protect Armenia, Greece, Cyprus, and the Kurds:

-- Armenia, Greece, Cyprus, the Kurds, and Turkey's other neighbors cannot be safe so long as they are bordered by an unrepentant, over-armed, and still aggressive perpetrator of genocide.

-- Ankara's denial of this crime represents an implicit threat to victimized groups that Turkey still believes it acted appropriately against them between 1915 and 1923, and would do so again if conditions warrant.

To Support Truthful Voices in Turkey:

-- America should stand with the small but growing number of Turkish scholars, writers and citizens who are affirming the Armenian Genocide and calling for a just resolution of this crime.

-- The pro-Turkish position on the Armenian Genocide is in solidarity with those within Turkey who are standing up for the truth.

To Protect Truth-tellers:

-- U.S. diplomats should never fear official punishment for citing a known case of genocide.

-- Sadly, the U.S. State Department has a history of enforcing Turkey's Armenian Genocide gag-rule against U.S. diplomats.

To Safeguard American Rights:

-- The U.S. Department of Justice, in a May 2013 brief to the Supreme Court, cited the non-recognition of the Armenian Genocide by successive U.S. presidents as justification for denying the right of American citizens to seek legal redress for genocide-era claims.

-- A clear, consistent policy of U.S. recognition of the Armenian Genocide would remove an obstacle currently hindering the right of Americans to seek legal redress for genocide-era claims.