



Armenian National Committee of America
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

May 18, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing on behalf of the Armenian National Committee of America to voice the Armenian American community's profound disappointment with your decision not to honor your pledge to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

In breaking your clearly stated and unambiguous commitment, you bitterly disappointed all those who believed in your solemn word to change a flawed U.S. policy on the Armenian Genocide, a policy that you yourself, in a letter you sent to your constituents last year, sharply criticized as "inexcusable." More broadly, you failed to honor your commitment to lift our nation's response to genocide to the level of our shared American values, choosing, instead, to allow America's willingness to respond forcefully to this horrific crime to remain hostage to Turkish threats and intimidation. This failure continues the morally flawed policy of allowing Turkey to veto our stand on human rights by effectively imposing a "gag" rule on U.S. recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

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Your broken pledge represents both a grave offense to Armenian Americans and a disservice to all Americans who understand that our nation's leadership in confronting genocide should never be reduced to a political issue that can be traded away, retreated from under pressure, or used to advance a political agenda, of any kind. The ongoing dialogue between Armenia and Turkey should have no bearing on your willingness to speak the truth about the Armenian Genocide; our stand against all instances of genocide should be unconditional.

What is so particularly disturbing about your reversal is that, in the course of your service in the United States Senate and your candidacy for the Presidency, you articulated a thorough knowledge of the facts of the Armenian Genocide, a firm grasp of the practical geo-political implications of proper American recognition of this atrocity, a comprehensive view of the value of Turkey's relationship to the United States, and a clear understanding of the profound moral issues at stake in the condemnation and commemoration of this crime against humanity. Nothing has changed since you gave your word except your failure to uphold it.

I respectfully call upon you to act quickly to correct your stand on the Armenian Genocide by properly and immediately condemning and commemorating this crime, and by working publicly toward the adoption of the Armenian Genocide Resolution before the U.S. Congress.

The Armenian American community is also troubled that, despite your pledge to maintain aid to Armenia and to foster her growth and development, you have called for a 38% cut in economic aid to Armenia. This represents the sharpest cut, by a significant margin, among all the recipient nations of Europe, Eurasia, and South and Central Asia, and takes place with the context of substantial proposed increases to each of these three regions and a roughly 9% overall escalation in international affairs spending.

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The singling out of Armenia, which has sent troops to Iraq and Kosovo, appears set to contribute to our operations in Afghanistan, and hosted the first NATO exercise in the region following the Russia-Georgia war, for such a dramatic cut, even as it endures dual Turkish and Azerbaijani blockades and an acute economic crisis, is profoundly troubling to our community. Compounding this disappointment was your decision to breach the Armenia-Azerbaijan military aid parity agreement in favor of Baku, a move that tilts the regional military balance and sends a dangerous signal to Azerbaijani leaders who have made no secret of their intent to use force of arms to settle the Nagorno Karabagh issue.

I appreciate your attention to the concerns of the Armenian American community and remain hopeful that you will, consistent with your campaign commitments, revise the course your Administration has chosen on issues of special concern to Armenia Americans. We would, of course, welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these matters personally and in greater detail.

Sincerely,



Kenneth V. Hachikian
Chairman