

April 22, 2004

On April 24, 1915, in Constantinople, the Ottoman Turkish government arrested and murdered several hundred Armenian religious, political and intellectual leaders, beginning a campaign of terror known as the Armenian Genocide.

From 1915 to 1923, the Ottoman Empire executed a systematic destruction of Armenian culture through the forced exile, imprisonment and annihilation of men, women and children of Armenian descent. More than 1.5 million Armenians perished, and 500,000 survivors were forced to leave their ancestral homeland in Turkey. Whole villages were massacred and many people died of exposure and starvation during forced death marches in the desert.

Despite this great tragedy, the Armenian people have persevered and today are striving to build a free and proud nation, based on the principles of democracy and a free-market economy. California is home to 700,000 Armenians - the largest Armenian community outside the Republic of Armenia. Throughout the decades, the Armenian-American community has contributed to California agriculture, business, education, public service and the arts. They have retained their distinct heritage, language and religion, bringing rich cultural diversity to the Golden State.

On this 89th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, we join with Armenians around the world to mourn the loss of so many innocent lives. In remembering this great human tragedy, we rededicate ourselves to combat injustice, and we honor the triumphant spirit of the Armenian people.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, Governor of the State of California, do hereby proclaim Saturday, April 24, 2004, as a "Day of Remembrance for the Armenian Genocide."

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have here unto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of California to be affixed this the twenty-second day of April 2004.

Signed Arnold Schwarzenegger

Governor of California