

May 6, 1986

STATE OF NEW YORK

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION

SENATE NO. 810

BY: Senators Weinstein and Marchi

DENOUNCING the Ottoman massacres of Armenians

WHEREAS, The Armenian Nation was founded around 700 B.C. by a tribe of Indo-Europeans who settled on a small pocket of land between Asia, Africa and Europe; a peaceful society, the Armenians developed their own language and culture over the centuries and became the first people to accept Christianity as their official religion shortly after 300 A.D.; and

WHEREAS, The land became a vital trade route between the East and West and was coveted by the Persians, the Medes, the Mongolians, the Russians, the Greeks, the Romans and the Arabs; however, the Christian Armenians were able to peacefully coexist with invading Armies until the birth of the Ottoman Nation, when the Turks established dominion over an empire stretching one thousand five hundred miles from Vienna to the Caucasus Mountains; and

WHEREAS, The Ottomans could neither tolerate nor integrate the independent Armenians, who spoke their own language and practiced their own religion; and

WHEREAS, The Ottomans functioned as a theocracy, with the sultan both head of state and absolute religious ruler; the pressure to maintain control over the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire became explosive as the Ottoman government exercised harsh repression, leading to the death of hundreds of thousands of Armenians in the 1890's; and

WHEREAS, A new regime was installed and the Ottoman successors turned to a policy of pan-Turanism, under which all peoples in the Empire would be forced to lose their right to self determination, a right denied this very day to over four million Armenians in the Soviet Union; and

WHEREAS, Pan-Turanism led to harsher measures in suppressing Armenian nationalism, and in 1909, more than thirty thousand Armenians were massacred in villages along the Cilician plains; and

WHEREAS, The early part of this century saw European powers choosing sides during the First World War, and Turkey joined forces with Germany against the Allies; and

WHEREAS, The immediate slaughter of all the Armenian elite, including the clergy, the intellectuals, the professionals and members of the business community, which was ordered on April 24, 1915, is commemorated by Armenians as the beginning of the Armenian genocide; and

WHEREAS, The horrors to which Armenian Christians were subjected during this, the first holocaust of the twentieth century, are unspeakable and such crimes are morally offensive and outrageous to the basic principles and values of civilization; and

WHEREAS, History attests to the devastation of the Armenian community with the extermination of more than one and one-half million Armenians in 1915 alone, as well as the wholesale massacres of hundreds of thousands more between 1896 and 1923; and

WHEREAS, The only Armenian American member of Congress, Representative Charles Pashayan, Jr., has produced evidence confirming that eight United States Presidents; namely, Benjamin Harrison, Grover Cleveland, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover and Warren G. Harding; were aware of the Christian Armenian massacres and were concerned about the fate of the Armenian population; and

WHEREAS, As early as 1894, President Benjamin Harrison wrote that "my indignation and sympathy have been greatly aroused by the press reports of the fearful outrages practiced on the Armenians."; and

WHEREAS, President Grover Cleveland, in his 1895 Annual Message to Congress, discussed "the reported massacres of Christians in Armenia," describing the conduct of the Turkish government as "fanatical brutality"; and

WHEREAS, President Theodore Roosevelt stated in his 1904 Annual Message to Congress, "Our nation should desire eagerly to give expression to its horror... when it witnesses such systematic and long-extended cruelty and oppression as the cruelty and oppression of which the Armenians have been the victims, and which have won for them the indignant pity of the civilized world."; and

WHEREAS, President William Howard Taft, in his 1920 Papers on the League of Nations, wrote that "the people of the Jewish race have suffered more in this war, as non-combatants, than any other people, unless it be the Serbians and the Armenians."; and

WHEREAS, in 1918, President Woodrow Wilson defined specific boundaries for establishing a free and independent Armenia under the auspices of the United States, constituting one of his Fourteen Points of Peace for the League of Nations; and

WHEREAS, President Wilson later advocated direct military intervention on behalf of the Armenians in 1919; and

WHEREAS, President Warren G. Harding wrote to his Secretary of State in 1921 that "If it is believed that a warship can be sent to an Armenian port on the Mediterranean I should have very little hesitancy in making such a suggestion on behalf of these stricken people."; and

WHEREAS, Turkey was proclaimed a republic in 1923, with Kemal Ataturk as its president, the Caliphate was abolished and the Sultan exiled, and religious freedom established; and

WHEREAS, Turkey in World War II supported the Allied Powers and today is a member of NATO and fought alongside American troops in Korea; and

WHEREAS, The memory of the Armenian tragedy is still recalled and Professor Raphael Lemkin, a survivor of Nazi Poland, who first coined the term "genocide" to describe the deliberate destruction of a people, was outraged by the extermination of the Armenians and was the first person to characterize the atrocities of 1915 to 1923 as the "Armenian genocide"; and

WHEREAS, Professor Lemkin's persistence and determination to urge the United Nations, in the name of justice, to recognize and educate the public as to the crimes, prompted Representative Coelho, Pashayan, Conte, Dornan and Aspin and United States Senators Levin and D'Amato to introduce a Joint Resolution during the First Session of the 99th Congress "To designate April 24, 1985, as 'National Day of Remembrance of Man's Inhumanity to Man,'" which read, "Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That April 24, 1985, is hereby designated as 'National Day of Remembrance of Man's

Inhumanity to Man', and the President of the United States is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe such a day as a day of remembrance for all victims of genocide, especially the more than one and one-half million people of Armenian ancestry who were victims of the genocide perpetrated in Turkey between 1915 and 1923, and in whose memory this date is commemorated by all Armenians and their friends throughout the world."; and

WHEREAS, The United States Senate, on February 19, 1986, endorsed the Genocide Convention by a vote of 87-11; and

WHEREAS, Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole described the treaty as having enormous symbolic value as a world wise statement of outrage and condemnation over very real horrors - "As real as the Armenian genocide and Hitler's death camps"; and

WHEREAS, The New York State Legislature has long been at the forefront of efforts to ensure that the victims and survivors of such holocausts are not forgotten; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to denounce the Ottoman massacres of Armenians and, mindful of the presidential statements which reflect an American policy of recognition of the Armenian genocide for nearly a century, focus collectively on the prevention of genocide through cooperation between nations; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Armenian Assembly of America, 122 C Street, N.W., Suite 350, Washington, D.C. 20001.

ADOPTED IN SENATE ON
May 6, 1986

By order of the Senate,
(SIGNED)
Stephen F. Sloan, Secretary