

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 21, 2009

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2009—10 REGULAR SESSION

Assembly Joint Resolution

No. 14

Introduced by Assembly Member Krekorian
(Principal coauthor: ~~Assembly Member De Leon~~ coauthors:
***Assembly Members De Leon, Lieu, and Portantino*)**
(Principal coauthors: Senators Cogdill, *Liu*, and Simitian)

April 14, 2009

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 14—Relative to the Armenian Genocide.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AJR 14, as amended, Krekorian. Armenian Genocide: Day of Remembrance.

This measure would designate April 24, 2009, as “California Day of Remembrance for the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923.” It would memorialize the Congress and the President of the United States to act likewise to commemorate the Armenian Genocide.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, The Armenian people, living in their 3,000-year
2 historic homeland in eastern Asia Minor and throughout the
3 Ottoman Empire, were subjected to severe persecution and brutal
4 injustice by the rulers of the Ottoman Empire before and after the
5 turn of the 20th century, including widespread massacres,
6 usurpation of land and property, and acts of wanton destruction
7 during the period from 1894 to 1896, inclusive, and again in 1909;
8 and

1 WHEREAS, The horrible experience of the Armenians at the
2 hands of their oppressors culminated in 1915 in what is known by
3 historians as the “First Genocide of the Twentieth Century,” and
4 as the prototype of modern day mass killing; and

5 WHEREAS, The Armenian Genocide began with the arrest,
6 exile, and murder of hundreds of Armenian intellectuals,~~and~~
7 *including* business, political, and religious leaders, starting on
8 April 24, 1915; and

9 WHEREAS, The regime then in control of the empire, known
10 as the “Young Turks,” planned and executed the unspeakable
11 atrocities committed against the Armenian people from 1915 to
12 1923, inclusive, which included the torture, starvation, and murder
13 of 1,500,000 Armenians, death marches into the Syrian Desert,
14 the forced exile of more than 500,000 innocent people, and the
15 loss of the traditional Armenian homelands; and

16 WHEREAS, While there were some Turks and others who
17 jeopardized their safety in order to protect Armenians from the
18 crimes being perpetrated by the Young Turk regime, the genocide
19 of the Armenian people constituted one of the most egregious
20 violations of human rights in the history of the world; and

21 WHEREAS, The United States Ambassador to the Ottoman
22 Empire, Henry Morgenthau, Sr., stated “Whatever crimes the most
23 perverted instincts of the human mind can devise, and whatever
24 refinements of persecutions and injustice the most debased
25 imagination can conceive, became the daily misfortunes of this
26 devoted people. I am confident that the whole history of the human
27 race contains no such horrible episode as this. The great massacres
28 and persecutions of the past seem almost insignificant when
29 compared to the sufferings of the Armenian race in 1915. The
30 killing of the Armenian people was accompanied by the systematic
31 destruction of churches, schools, libraries, treasures of art, and
32 cultural monuments in an attempt to eliminate all traces of a noble
33 civilization with a history of more than 3,000 years”; and

34 WHEREAS, In discussing World War I, President Theodore
35 Roosevelt wrote that “... the Armenian massacre was the greatest
36 crime of the war, and the failure to act against Turkey is to condone
37 it ... the failure to deal radically with the Turkish horror means that
38 all talk of guaranteeing the future peace of the world is mischievous
39 nonsense”; and

1 WHEREAS, Winston Churchill wrote: “As for Turkish
2 atrocities: ... massacring uncounted thousands of helpless
3 Armenians, men, women, and children together, whole districts
4 blotted out in one administrative holocaust—these were beyond
5 human redress”; and

6 WHEREAS, Contemporary newspapers like the New York
7 Times commonly carried headlines such as “Tales of Armenian
8 Horrors Confirmed,” “Million Armenians Killed or in Exile,” and
9 “Wholesale Massacre of Armenians by Turks”; and

10 WHEREAS, Adolph Hitler, in persuading his army commanders
11 on the eve of World War II that the merciless persecution and
12 killing of Poles, Jews, and other peoples would bring no retribution,
13 declared, “Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the
14 Armenians?”; and

15 WHEREAS, Unlike other peoples and governments that have
16 admitted and denounced the abuses and crimes of predecessor
17 regimes, and despite the overwhelming proof of genocidal intent,
18 the Republic of Turkey has inexplicably and adamantly denied the
19 occurrence of the crimes against humanity committed by the Young
20 Turk rulers, and those denials compound the grief of the few
21 remaining survivors of the atrocities, desecrate the memory of the
22 victims, and cause continuing trauma and pain to the descendants
23 of the victims; and

24 WHEREAS, The Turkish Government has engaged in concerted
25 efforts to revise history through the dissemination of propaganda
26 falsely suggesting that Armenians were responsible for their fate
27 in the period from 1915 to 1923, inclusive, and by the funding of
28 programs at American educational institutions for the purpose of
29 furthering the cause of this revisionism; and

30 WHEREAS, The Republic of Turkey has been condemned by
31 Amnesty International and other human rights organizations for
32 making free speech a crime by enacting Article 301 of the Turkish
33 Penal Code, which makes “public denigration of Turkishness ...
34 the Government of the Republic of Turkey, the judicial institutions
35 of the State, the military or security structures” punishable by
36 imprisonment, and has used this device to harass, intimidate,
37 prosecute, and imprison Turkish citizens who have written or
38 spoken honestly about the Armenian Genocide, including Nobel
39 Prize winning author Orhan Pamuk; and

1 WHEREAS, Among those charged with “denigration of
2 Turkishness” by Turkish prosecutors for his forthright
3 acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide was journalist Hrant
4 Dink, and in this atmosphere of intolerance of dissent, Mr. Dink
5 was assassinated for his views on January 19, 2007; and

6 WHEREAS, The accelerated level and scope of denial and
7 revisionism, coupled with the passage of time and the fact that few
8 survivors remain who serve as personal eyewitnesses to the
9 indescribable brutality and torment, compel a sense of urgency in
10 achieving formal recognition and reaffirmation of the historical
11 truth of the Armenian Genocide; and

12 WHEREAS, By honoring the victims and survivors, and
13 consistently remembering and forcefully condemning the atrocities
14 committed against the Armenian people as well as the persecution
15 of the Assyrian and Greek populations of the Ottoman Empire, we
16 guard against repetition of the crime of genocide; and

17 WHEREAS, California has become home to the largest
18 population of Armenians in the world outside of Armenia,
19 including Armenian Genocide survivors and their descendants,
20 and those citizens have enriched our state and our Nation through
21 leadership in academia, medicine, business, law, agriculture,
22 government, the arts, and many other worthy endeavors, and they
23 are proud and patriotic practitioners of American citizenship; and

24 WHEREAS, The State of California has been at the forefront
25 of encouraging and promoting a curriculum relating to human
26 rights and genocide in order to empower future generations to
27 prevent recurrence of the crime of genocide; now, therefore, be it

28 *Resolved by the Assembly and Senate of the State of California,*
29 *jointly,* That the Legislature of the State of California hereby
30 designates April 24, 2009, as the “California Day of Remembrance
31 for the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923”; and be it further

32 *Resolved,* That the State of California commends its
33 conscientious educators who teach about human rights and
34 genocide; and be it further

35 *Resolved,* That the State of California respectfully memorializes
36 the Congress and the President of the United States to act likewise
37 and to formally recognize and reaffirm the historical truth that the
38 atrocities committed against the Armenian people constituted
39 genocide; and be it further

1 *Resolved*, That the State of California calls upon the Republic
2 of Turkey to acknowledge the facts of the Armenian Genocide and
3 to work toward a just resolution; and be it further

4 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
5 of this resolution to the President of the United States, Members
6 of the United States Congress, the Governor, and the Turkish
7 Ambassador to the United States.

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10 CORRECTIONS: _____

11 Heading—Lines 2 and 4.

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