

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 14, 2015

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 26, 2015

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2015–16 REGULAR SESSION

Assembly Joint Resolution

No. 2

Introduced by Assembly Members Nazarian, Achadjian, Alejo, Atkins, Baker, Bigelow, Bloom, Bonta, Brown, Burke, Calderon, Chang, Chávez, Chiu, Chu, Cooper, Dababneh, Dahle, Eggman, Cristina Garcia, Eduardo Garcia, Gatto, Gipson, Gomez, Gray, Hadley, Holden, Irwin, Jones-Sawyer, Kim, Lackey, Levine, Low, Maienschein, Mayes, McCarty, Medina, Mullin, Obernolte, O'Donnell, Olson, Olsen, Perea, Rendon, Ridley-Thomas, Salas, Santiago, Mark Stone, Ting, Waldron, Weber, Wilk, and Williams
(Principal coauthors: Senators *Berryhill*, Cannella, De León, Hall, Lara, Liu, Mendoza, and Runner)

December 1, 2014

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 2—Relative to the Armenian Genocide.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AJR 2, as amended, Nazarian. Armenian Genocide.

This measure would, among other things, designate the year of 2015 as “State of California Year of Commemoration of the Centennial Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923,” designate April 24, 2015, as “State of California Day of Commemoration of the Centennial Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923,” ~~urge the Republic of Turkey to acknowledge the facts of the Armenian Genocide and to work toward a just resolution,~~ and would call upon the President of the United States and the United States Congress to

formally and consistently reaffirm the historical truth that the atrocities committed against the Armenian people constituted genocide.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, Armenians have resided in Asia Minor and the
2 Caucasus for approximately four millennia, and have a long and
3 rich history in the region, including the establishment of many
4 kingdoms, and despite Armenians' historic presence, stewardship,
5 and autonomy in the region, Turkish rulers of the Ottoman Empire
6 and the Republic of Turkey subjected Armenians to severe and
7 unjust persecution and brutality, including wholesale massacres
8 beginning in the 1890s; and

9 WHEREAS, The Armenian nation was subjected to a systematic
10 and premeditated genocide officially beginning on April 24, 1915,
11 at the hands of the Young Turk Government of the Ottoman Empire
12 from 1915–1919 and continued at the hands of the Kemalist
13 Movement of Turkey from 1920–1923 whereby over 1.5 million
14 Armenian men, women, and children were slaughtered or marched
15 to their deaths in an effort to annihilate the Armenian nation in the
16 first genocide of modern times, while thousands of surviving
17 Armenian women and children were forcibly converted and
18 Islamized, and hundreds of thousands more were subjected to
19 ethnic cleansing during the period of the modern Republic of
20 Turkey from 1924–1937; and

21 WHEREAS, During the genocides of the Christians living in
22 the Ottoman Empire and surrounding regions, which occurred
23 during the first one-half of the 20th century, 1.5 million men,
24 women, and children of Armenian descent, and hundreds of
25 thousands of Assyrians, Greeks, and other Christians, lost their
26 lives at the hands of the Ottoman Turkish Empire and the Republic
27 of Turkey, constituting one of the most atrocious violations of
28 human rights in the history of the world; and

29 WHEREAS, These crimes against humanity also had the
30 consequence of permanently removing all traces of the Armenians
31 and other targeted people from their historic homelands of more
32 than four millennia, and enriching the perpetrators with the lands
33 and other property of the victims of these crimes, including the
34 usurpation of several thousand churches; and

35 WHEREAS, In response to the genocide and at the behest of
36 President Woodrow Wilson and the United States State

1 Department, the Near East Relief organization was founded, and
2 became the first congressionally sanctioned American philanthropic
3 effort created exclusively to provide humanitarian assistance and
4 rescue to the Armenian nation and other Christian minorities from
5 annihilation, who went on to survive and thrive outside of their
6 ancestral homeland all over the world and specifically in this state;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, Near East Relief succeeded, with the active
9 participation of the citizens from this state, in delivering \$117
10 million of *in* assistance, and saving more than one million refugees,
11 including 132,000 orphans, between 1915 and 1930, by delivering
12 food, clothing, and materials for shelter, setting up refugee camps,
13 clinics, hospitals, and orphanages; and

14 WHEREAS, The Armenian nation survived the genocide despite
15 the attempt by the Ottoman Empire and the modern Republic of
16 Turkey to exterminate it; and

17 WHEREAS, Adolf Hitler, in persuading his army commanders
18 that the merciless persecution and killing of Jews, Poles, and other
19 people would bring no retribution, declared, “Who, after all, speaks
20 today of the annihilation of the Armenians?”; and

21 ~~WHEREAS, The planning and implementation of genocide is~~
22 ~~indisputably recognized in international law as a crime against~~
23 ~~humanity and is punishable as such, yet has remained unpunished~~
24 ~~for nearly 100 years, as the government of Turkey is allowed with~~
25 ~~impunity to distort history and to deny the genocide and its~~
26 ~~consequences perpetrated both by its Ottoman predecessor and its~~
27 ~~own predecessor regimes despite international recognition of the~~
28 ~~Armenian Genocide by 23 countries, including the United States~~
29 ~~of America; and~~

30 WHEREAS, On November 4, 1918, immediately after the
31 collapse of the Young Turk regime and before the founding of the
32 Republic of Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1923, the
33 Ottoman Parliament considered a motion on the crimes committed
34 by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP): “A population
35 of one million people guilty of nothing except belonging to the
36 Armenian nation were massacred and exterminated, including even
37 women and children.” The Minister of Interior at the time, Fethi
38 Bey, responded by telling the Parliament: “It is the intention of
39 the government to cure every single injustice done up until now,
40 as far as the means allow, to make possible the return to their

1 homes of those sent into exile, and to compensate for their material
2 loss as far as possible”; and

3 WHEREAS, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk made a historic admission
4 in an interview published in the Los Angeles Examiner on August
5 1, 1926: “These leftovers from the former Young Turk Party, who
6 should have been made accountable for the lives of millions of
7 our Christian subjects who were ruthlessly driven, en masse, from
8 their homes and massacred”; and

9 WHEREAS, The Parliamentary Investigative Committee
10 proceeded to collect relevant documents describing the actions of
11 those responsible for the Armenian mass killings and turned them
12 over to the Turkish Military Tribunal. CUP’s leading figures were
13 found guilty of massacring Armenians and hanged or given lengthy
14 prison sentences. The Turkish Military Tribunal requested that
15 Germany extradite to Turkey the masterminds of the massacres
16 who had fled the country. After German refusal, they were tried
17 in absentia and sentenced to death; and

18 WHEREAS, Unlike other people and governments that have
19 admitted and denounced the abuses and crimes of predecessor
20 regimes, and despite the Turkish government’s earlier admissions
21 and the overwhelming proof of genocidal intent, the Republic of
22 Turkey inexplicably and adamantly has denied the occurrence of
23 the crimes against humanity committed by the Ottoman and Young
24 Turk rulers for many years, and continues to do so a full century
25 since the first crimes constituting genocide occurred; and

26 WHEREAS, Those denials compound the grief of the few
27 remaining survivors of the atrocities, desecrate the memory of the
28 victims, cause continuing pain to the descendants of the victims,
29 and deprive the surviving Armenian nation, both on individual and
30 collective levels, of their ancestral land, property, culture, heritage,
31 financial assets, and population growth; and

32 WHEREAS, The Republic of Turkey has escalated its
33 international campaign of Armenian Genocide denial, maintained
34 its blockade of Armenia, and increased its pressure on the small
35 but growing movement in Turkey acknowledging the Armenian
36 Genocide and seeking justice for this systematic campaign of
37 destruction of millions of Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, and other
38 Christians upon their biblical-era homelands; and

39 WHEREAS, Those citizens of Turkey, both Armenian and
40 non-Armenian, who continue to speak the truth about the Armenian

1 Genocide, such as human rights activist and journalist Hrant Dink,
2 continue to be silenced by violent means; and

3 ~~WHEREAS, Leaders of nations with strategic, commercial, and~~
4 ~~cultural ties to the Republic of Turkey should be reminded of their~~
5 ~~duty to encourage Turkish officials to cease efforts to distort facts~~
6 ~~and deny the history of events surrounding the Armenian Genocide;~~
7 ~~and~~

8 ~~WHEREAS, The failure of the international community to hold~~
9 ~~responsible nations accountable for crimes against humanity results~~
10 ~~in a travesty of justice and sets a negative precedent; and~~

11 WHEREAS, There is continued concern about the welfare of
12 Christians in the Republic of Turkey, their right to worship and
13 practice freely, and the legal status and condition of thousands of
14 ancient Armenian churches, monasteries, cemeteries, and other
15 historical and cultural structures, sites, and antiquities in the
16 Republic of Turkey; and

17 WHEREAS, The United States is on record as having officially
18 recognized the Armenian Genocide in the United States
19 government’s May 28, 1951, written statement to the International
20 Court of Justice regarding the Reservations to the Convention on
21 the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, through
22 President Ronald Reagan’s April 22, 1981, Proclamation No. 4838,
23 and by congressional legislation including House Joint Resolution
24 148 adopted on April 9, 1975, and House Joint Resolution 247
25 adopted on September 12, 1984; and

26 WHEREAS, Even prior to the Convention on the Prevention
27 and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the United States has
28 a record of having sought to justly and constructively address the
29 consequences of the Ottoman Empire’s intentional destruction of
30 the Armenian people, including through United States Senate
31 Concurrent Resolution 12 adopted on February 9, 1916, United
32 States Senate Resolution 359 adopted on May 11, 1920, and
33 President Woodrow Wilson’s November 22, 1920, decision
34 entitled, “The Frontier between Armenia and Turkey,” which was
35 issued as a binding arbitral award, yet has not been enforced to
36 this date despite its legally binding status; and

37 WHEREAS, President Barack Obama entered office “calling
38 for Turkey’s acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide” and on
39 April 24, 2013, and similarly on April 24, 2014, he further stated,
40 “A full, frank, and just acknowledgment of the facts is in all of

1 our interests. Peoples and nations grow stronger, and build a more
2 just and tolerant future, by acknowledging and reckoning with
3 painful elements of the past”; and

4 WHEREAS, California is home to the largest
5 Armenian-American population in the United States, and
6 Armenians living in California have enriched our state through
7 their leadership and contribution in business, agriculture, academia,
8 government, and the arts, many of whom have family members
9 who experienced firsthand the horror and evil of the Armenian
10 Genocide and its ongoing denial; and

11 WHEREAS, Every person should be made aware and educated
12 about the Armenian Genocide and other crimes against humanity,
13 and this state has been at the forefront of encouraging and
14 promoting a curriculum relating to human rights and genocide in
15 order to empower future generations to prevent the recurrence of
16 genocide; and

17 WHEREAS, April 24, 1915, is globally observed and recognized
18 as the commencement of the Armenian Genocide and April 24,
19 2015, will mark the centennial anniversary since the
20 commencement of the Armenian Genocide; and

21 WHEREAS, Armenians in this state and throughout the world,
22 have not been provided with justice for the crimes perpetrated
23 against the Armenian nation despite the fact that a century has
24 passed since the crimes were first committed; and

25 WHEREAS, The Armenian people, in this state and elsewhere,
26 remain resolved and their spirit continues to thrive a century after
27 their near annihilation; now, therefore, be it

28 *Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of*
29 *California, jointly*, That the Legislature hereby designates the year
30 of 2015 as “State of California Year of Commemoration of the
31 Centennial Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923”
32 and in doing so, intends, through the enactment of legislation, that
33 the Armenian Genocide is properly commemorated and taught to
34 its citizens and visitors through statewide educational and cultural
35 events; and be it further

36 *Resolved*, That the Legislature hereby designates April 24, 2015,
37 as “State of California Day of Commemoration of the Centennial
38 Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923”; and be it
39 further

1 *Resolved*, That the Legislature commends its conscientious
2 educators who teach about human rights and genocide, and intends
3 for them, through the enactment of legislation, to continue to
4 enhance their efforts to educate students at all levels about the
5 experience of the Armenians and other crimes against humanity;
6 and be it further

7 *Resolved*, That the Legislature hereby commends the
8 extraordinary service which was delivered by Near East Relief to
9 the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and the Assyrian
10 Genocide, including thousands of direct beneficiaries of American
11 philanthropy who are the parents, grandparents, and
12 great-grandparents of many Californian Armenians and Assyrians,
13 and pledges its intent, through the enactment of legislation, to
14 working with community groups, nonprofit organizations, citizens,
15 state personnel, and the community at large to host statewide
16 educational and cultural events; and be it further

17 *Resolved*, That the Legislature deplores the persistent, ongoing
18 efforts by any person, in this country or abroad, to deny the
19 historical fact of the Armenian Genocide; and be it further

20 ~~*Resolved*, That the Legislature urges the Republic of Turkey to
21 acknowledge the facts of the Armenian Genocide and to work
22 toward a just resolution, to honor its obligations under international
23 treaties and human rights laws, to end all forms of religious
24 discrimination and persecution, to return Christian church
25 properties to their rightful owners, and to allow the owners and
26 congregants of all churches to conduct their religious activities
27 unhindered, including, but not limited to, prayer services and
28 religious observances, education and training, community
29 gatherings, and social services; and be it further~~

30 *Resolved*, That the Legislature respectfully calls upon the
31 President of the United States and the United States Congress to
32 ~~act likewise~~ and to formally and consistently reaffirm the historical
33 truth that the atrocities committed against the Armenian people
34 constituted genocide; and be it further

35 *Resolved*, That the Legislature calls on the President of the
36 United States to work toward equitable, constructive, stable, and
37 durable Armenian-Turkish relations based upon the Republic of
38 Turkey's full acknowledgment of the facts and ongoing
39 consequences of the Armenian Genocide, and a fair, just, and

1 ~~comprehensive international resolution of this crime against~~
 2 ~~humanity; relations; and be it further~~
 3 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
 4 of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United
 5 States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the
 6 Majority Leader of the Senate, to each Senator and Representative
 7 from California in the Congress of the United States, to the
 8 Governor of California, *to every member of the California State*
 9 *Legislature, and to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and*
 10 ~~to the Turkish Ambassador to the United States.~~ *Instruction.*

11
 12 _____
 13 **CORRECTIONS:**
 14 **Heading—Line 9.**
 15 _____