

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 21, 2011

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2011–12 REGULAR SESSION

Assembly Joint Resolution

No. 2

Introduced by Assembly Members Portantino and Achadjian
(Principal coauthors: Assembly Members Conway, Gatto and
Halderman, Halderman, and John Pérez)

(Coauthors: Assembly Members Ammiano, Bill Berryhill, Block,
Cook, Garrick, Gordon, Hagman, Harkey, Huffman, Bonnie
Lowenthal, Ma, Monning, Nielsen, Olsen, Swanson, and Williams)

(Principal coauthors: Senators Berryhill, De León, Liu, Simitian,
Wyland, and Yee)

(Coauthors: Senators Cannella, Dutton, and Rubio)

January 25, 2011

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

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

AJR 2, as amended, Portantino. Armenian Genocide: Day of Remembrance.

This measure would designate April 24, 2011, 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

1 turn of the 20th century, including widespread massacres,
2 usurpation of land and property, and acts of wanton destruction
3 during the period from 1894 to 1896, inclusive, and again in 1909;
4 and

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

9 WHEREAS, The Armenian Genocide began with the arrest,
10 exile, and murder of hundreds of Armenian intellectuals, including
11 business, political, and religious leaders, starting on April 24, 1915;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, The regime then in control of the empire, known
14 as the “Young Turks,” planned and executed the unspeakable
15 atrocities committed against the Armenian people from 1915 to
16 1923, inclusive, which included the torture, starvation, and murder
17 of 1,500,000 Armenians, death marches into the Syrian Desert,
18 the forced exile of more than 500,000 innocent people, and the
19 loss of the traditional Armenian homelands; and

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

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

38 WHEREAS, In discussing World War I, President Theodore
39 Roosevelt wrote that “... the Armenian massacre was the greatest
40 crime of the war, and the failure to act against Turkey is to condone

1 it ... the failure to deal radically with the Turkish horror means that
2 all talk of guaranteeing the future peace of the world is mischievous
3 nonsense”; and

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

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

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

18 WHEREAS, Raphael Lemkin, the attorney who coined the word
19 “genocide” in 1948 and who was instrumental in the establishment
20 of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and
21 Punishment of Genocide, cited the Armenian Genocide as a clear
22 example of genocide; and

23 WHEREAS, The United States, through its filing with the
24 International Court of Justice in 1951 pertaining to the United
25 Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the ~~crime~~
26 *Crime* of Genocide expressly noted that “outstanding examples
27 on the crime of genocide” included the “Turkish massacres of
28 Armenians”; and

29 WHEREAS, The United States, in a letter from Assistant
30 Secretary *of State*, Legislative Affairs, Matthew A. Reynolds to
31 the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, dated
32 July 29, 2008, acknowledged and reaffirmed the historical record
33 of the Armenian Genocide by stating, the “Administration
34 recognizes that the mass killings, ethnic cleansing, and forced
35 deportations of over one and a half million Armenians were
36 conducted by the Ottoman Empire”; and

37 WHEREAS, Unlike other ~~peoples and~~ governments that have
38 ~~admitted and~~ denounced the ~~abuses and~~ crimes of predecessor
39 regimes, and despite the overwhelming proof of genocidal intent,
40 the Republic of Turkey has inexplicably and adamantly denied the

1 occurrence of the crimes against humanity committed by the Young
2 Turk rulers, and those denials compound the grief of the few
3 remaining survivors of the atrocities, desecrate the memory of the
4 victims, and cause continuing trauma and pain to the descendants
5 of the victims; and

6 WHEREAS, The Turkish ~~Government~~ *government* has engaged
7 in concerted efforts to revise history through the dissemination of
8 propaganda falsely suggesting that Armenians were responsible
9 for their fate in the period from 1915 to 1923, inclusive, and ~~by~~
10 ~~the funding of~~ *funded* programs at American educational
11 institutions for the purpose of furthering the cause of this
12 revisionism; and

13 WHEREAS, The Republic of Turkey has been condemned by
14 Amnesty International and other human rights organizations for
15 making free speech a crime by enacting Article 301 of the Turkish
16 Penal Code, which makes “public denigration of Turkishness ...
17 the Government of the Republic of Turkey, the judicial institutions
18 of the State, the military or security structures” punishable by
19 imprisonment, and has used this device to harass, intimidate,
20 prosecute, and imprison Turkish citizens who have written or
21 spoken honestly about the Armenian Genocide, including Nobel
22 Prize winning author Orhan Pamuk; and

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

28 WHEREAS, The accelerated level and scope of denial and
29 revisionism, coupled with ~~the passage of time~~ and the fact that few
30 survivors remain who serve as personal eyewitnesses to the
31 indescribable brutality and torment, compel a sense of urgency in
32 achieving formal recognition and reaffirmation of the historical
33 truth of the Armenian Genocide; and

34 WHEREAS, By honoring the victims and survivors, and
35 consistently remembering and forcefully condemning the atrocities
36 committed against the Armenian people as well as the persecution
37 of the Assyrian and Greek populations of the Ottoman Empire, we
38 guard against repetition of ~~the crime of~~ genocide; and

39 WHEREAS, California has become home to the largest
40 population of Armenians in the world outside of Armenia,

1 including Armenian Genocide survivors and their descendants,
2 and those citizens have enriched our state and our Nation through
3 leadership in academia, medicine, business, law, agriculture,
4 government, the arts, and many other worthy endeavors, and they
5 are proud and patriotic practitioners of American citizenship; and

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

10 *Resolved by the Assembly and Senate of the State of California,*
11 *jointly,* That the Legislature of the State of California hereby
12 designates April 24, 2011, as the “California Day of Remembrance
13 for the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923”; and be it further

14 *Resolved,* That the State of California commends its
15 conscientious educators who teach about human rights and
16 genocide; and be it further

17 *Resolved,* That the State of California respectfully memorializes
18 the Congress and the President of the United States to act likewise
19 and to formally recognize and reaffirm the historical truth that the
20 atrocities committed against the Armenian people constituted
21 genocide; and be it further

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

25 *Resolved,* That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
26 of this resolution to the President of the United States, Members
27 of the United States Congress, the Governor, and the Turkish
28 Ambassador to the United States.