

one of the most appalling violations of human rights in all of human history—as today marks the 81st anniversary of the Armenian genocide.

I want to commend my colleagues JOHN PORTER of Illinois and FRANK PALLONE of New Jersey, the coauthors of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, for sponsoring this special order.

The great Armenian massacre which took place between 1915 to 1916, shocked public opinion in the United States and Western Europe. As Henry Morgenthau, Sr., the former U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, stated:

I am confident that the whole history of the human race contains no such horrible episode as this. The great massacres and persecutions of the past seem almost insignificant when compared to the sufferings of the Armenian race in 1915.

Mr. Speaker, in reality, this atrocity lasted over an 8-year period from 1915 to 1923. During this time, the Ottoman Empire carried out a systematic policy of eliminating its Christian Armenian population.

As a Greek-American, I have always felt a special kinship for the Armenian people. My Greek ancestors like those of Armenian descent, have also suffered at the hands of the Ottoman Empire, and as my colleagues may know, I hold a special order every year to celebrate Greek independence from over 400 years of Turkish oppression.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to have cosponsored House Concurrent Resolution 47, which honors the memory of the victims of the Armenian genocide.

I have also joined my colleagues in sending a letter to President Clinton expressing disappointment in the fact that he used the word “massacres” rather than the word “genocide” to describe this systematic annihilation of 1.5 million Armenians. In my opinion this distinction is more than a matter of semantics; it is rather the difference between a random series of atrocities and a systematic, ethnically based policy of extermination.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask that we take a moment to reflect upon the hardships endured by the Armenians. In the face of adversity the Armenian people have persevered. The survivors of the genocide and their descendants have made great contributions to every country in which they have settled—including the United States, where Armenians have made their mark in business, the professions, and our cultural life. Commemorate seems the wrong word to use, Mr. Speaker, but it is fitting and right that we mark this dark event today. For it is only through focusing on it that we hold out hope for the future that no such event will occur again.

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COMMEMORATING THE EIGHTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Michigan [Mr. BONIOR] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I also would like to commend my colleagues, the gentleman from New Jersey, FRANK PALLONE, and the gentleman from Illinois, JOHN PORTER, for taking out this commemorative of the 81st anniversary of the Armenian genocide.

Mr. Speaker, beginning on the night of April 24 in 1915, the religious and intellectual leaders of the Armenian community of Constantinople were taken from their beds, imprisoned, tortured, and killed.

In the days that followed, the remaining males over 15 years of age were gathered in cities, towns, and villages throughout Ottoman Turkey, roped together, marched to nearby uninhabited areas, and killed.

Innocent women and children were forced to march through barren wastelands—urged on by whips and clubs—denied food and water.

And when they dared to step out of line, they were repeatedly attacked, robbed, raped, and ultimately killed.

When all was said and done, 1½ million Armenians lay dead, and a homeland which had stood for 3,000 years was nearly completely depopulated.

Mr. Speaker, we come to the floor this evening to remember the victims—and the survivors—of the Armenian genocide.

As we come to this floor, we do so with the knowledge that all of us have a responsibility to remember the victims, to speak out and to make sure that tragedies like this are never allowed to happen again.

That's one of the reasons why some of us have introduced a resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 47, sponsored by over 150 of our colleagues to remember the victims of the Armenian genocide.

Now more than ever, those of us who embrace democracy have a responsibility to speak out for all those who live under tyranny.

Because sadly, the world does not seem to have learned the lessons of the past.

We have seen bloodshed this decade in places like Bosnia and Nagorno Karabakh.

American leadership has helped to bring about a chance for peace in Bosnia.

Now we must do the same in Nagorno Karabakh.

For most Americans, Nagorno Karabakh is not a place that registers on the radar screen, for it is not a CNN war.

But it is a place where 100,000 people have been killed or wounded over the past 7 years, and 1 million others have been left homeless.

Mr. Speaker, we're all hopeful that this terrible tragedy ends soon. We're all hopeful that the case-fire in place for 2 years continues to hold while work continues to bring about a lasting peace.

People are slowly starting to return to their homes.

In recent months, our administration, the Russian government, the OSCE Minsk Group, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Armenia have all begun efforts to resolve the conflict.

But our efforts must be intensified, and the integrity and security of the Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh must be guaranteed as we move forward.

We must also continue to speak out against the refusal of Turkey to allow humanitarian aid to flow into Armenia.

Mr. Speaker, we now have a provision in law, section 562, that cuts off aid to any country, that restricts the transport or delivery of U.S. humanitarian assistance.

It is utterly unconscionable to me that a country who is an ally of ours, who is a member of NATO, and who accepts U.S. aid, would think it has the right to block U.S. humanitarian assistance.

The third largest recipient of U.S. assistance must know that section 562 will be enforced and the aid will stop unless it ends its blockade of Armenia.

Mr. Speaker, we must pause today and say “Never again.”

We can forget that in 1939, another leader used the Armenian genocide as justification for his own genocide.

This leader said, and I quote:

I have given orders to my death units to exterminate without mercy or pity, men, women, and children belonging to the Polish-speaking race. After all,

Adolf Hitler asked, who today remembers the extermination of the Armenians?

Mr. Speaker, it is up to all of us to remember.

For centuries, the Armenian people have shown great courage and great strength.

The least we can do is match their courage with our commitment.

Because in the end, we are their voices and we must do all we can to remember.

Because if we don't, nobody else will.

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ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. RADANOVICH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, between 1915 and 1923 the Ottoman Turkish Empire committed a terrible genocide against Armenians. In a systematic and deliberate campaign to eliminate the Armenian people and erase their culture and history of 3,000 years the Turks committed this atrocity. As a result, over one-half million Armenians were massacred. The Armenian genocide is a historical fact, and has been recognized by academics and historians all over the world. The documentary evidence is irrefutable and beyond question. Unfortunately, the Turkish Government is still persisting in their denial that the genocide took place.