

Decades later, 6 million Jews would perish in the Holocaust before the community of nations would adopt the universal declaration of human rights. Then, as I have said, the Helsinki Final Act, some years later.

The declaration on human rights captured the world's revulsion of that traditional view of international relations and made clear a new norm: how a State treats its own people is of direct and legitimate concern to all States and is not simply an internal affair of the State concerned.

□ 1545

Mr. Speaker, I trust that all of us will urge our Turkish friends who were not involved in this genocide, but who now head their governments, to acknowledge and express their own horror at those acts taken in 1915.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. SWEENEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SWEENEY. Mr. Speaker, I, too, join my colleagues and commend my colleagues this evening for working towards educating the world about the Armenian genocide. I am a proud member of the Armenian Caucus, and, Mr. Speaker, I come with some qualifications in that I am one of two Members of Congress from Armenian ancestry.

We continue to take important steps every day, like the planned establishment of an Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial here in Washington, D.C., but more needs to be done to further educate our citizens about these atrocities.

As we are all well aware, since the latter part of the 21st century, our Nation has been focused on a hotbed of activity in the Middle East. During the past 7 months, we have seen the level of commitment the Nation has dedicated toward the war on terror, but it is vital that the United States recognize, in particular, the 20th century's first instance of genocidal terror, the Armenian genocide.

Mr. Speaker, our country appreciates the importance of a strong partnership with Armenia in these trying times. Armenia continues to move forward alongside our country by pledging assistance as we progress on the war on terror. Now we must move forward with Armenia hand-in-hand by recognizing the past atrocities for what they truly are: a genocide.

I cannot stress enough, Mr. Speaker, that the historical record is clear. From at least 1915 to 1923, the Ottoman Empire succeeded in systematically eliminating the Armenians from the historical homeland where they lived for more than 2000 years.

I would take this moment to point out that this is a particularly personal message from my family to the rest of the world. My grandfather, Oscar Chaderjian, emigrated from Armenia

at the beginning of the 21st century, but only after he had been witness to and forced to be involved in the execution of one of his own uncles, a schoolteacher. He was forced to hold one arm with his cousin, whose dad was attached to the other arm, while the Ottoman Turks executed him in front of a classroom full of Armenian children.

Recognizing the severity of the Ottoman Empire's actions, England, France, and Russia jointly issued a statement on May 24, 1950, explicitly charging a government for the first time with a crime against humanity. The Armenian genocide has been acknowledged by not only these nations but also Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Cyprus, Greece, Lebanon, and Uruguay, as well as by international organizations such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament.

Furthermore, the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration has broad and thorough documentation of the Armenian genocide; in particular, Record Group 59 of the United States Department of State, files 867.00 and 867.40.

America must take another step and acknowledge the Armenian genocide in history so that we may begin to educate the world as to its effect, and therefore avoid, and serve as a means of avoiding, similar kinds of atrocities in the future.

We must bring awareness of the atrocities that have plagued history in areas such as Armenia, Europe, Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Sierra Leone. Acknowledging these events of the past will provide us with the proper tools to ensure peace and stability in the future. Peace and stability must always be a goal of a civilized world.

As always, I am proud to stand with Armenians, and even prouder to be one of them. Mr. Speaker, we call on our friends, the Turks, to recognize that recognizing the actions of the past by other people not of this generation of Turks, not of this Turkish government, is not to condemn the current, but to recognize the past so that we may never repeat it.

RECOGNITION OF THE 1915 ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HASTINGS of Washington). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize April 24th, 1915 as one of the darkest days of the 20th century. On this day 300 Armenian leaders, writers, religious figures and professionals in Constantinople were gathered together, deported, and brutally murdered. Thousands of Armenian citizens were dragged out of their homes and murdered in the streets. What few citizens remained were taken from their communities and marched off to concentration camps in the desert, where

most died of starvation and thirst. The Ottoman Empire systematically deprived Armenians of their homes, property, freedom, and ultimately, their lives. By 1923, 1.5 million Armenian citizens had been murdered, while half a million had been deported.

Today, we must overcome the obstacle of denial. The Armenian Genocide is a historical fact. The United States and the international community must overcome this denial and recognize the horror that took place between 1915 and 1923.

The Armenian people have spent the last ten years courageously establishing an Independent Republic of Armenia. These efforts are a testament to the strength and character of the Armenian people. I strongly support the United States' continued efforts with Armenia to ensure a safe and stable environment in the Caucasus region.

Today, I join my colleagues in recognizing the Armenian genocide of 1915, and while this is indeed a day of mourning, we must also take this opportunity to celebrate Armenia's commitment towards democracy in the face of adversity.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, as a proud member of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, and the representative of a large and vibrant community of Armenian-Americans, I rise today to join my colleagues in the sad commemoration of the Armenian Genocide.

Today, we continue the crusade to ensure that this tragedy is never forgotten. This 87th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide is an emotional time. The loss of life experienced by so many families is devastating. But, in the face of the systematic slaughter of 1.5 million people, the Armenian community has persevered with a vision of life and of freedom.

Armenian Americans are representative of the resolve, bravery, and strength of spirit that is so characteristic of Armenians around the world. That strength carried them through humanity's worst: Upheaval from a homeland of 3,000 years, massacre of kin, and deportation to foreign lands. That same strength gathers Armenians around the world to make certain that this tragedy is never forgotten.

Without recognition and remembrance, this atrocity remains a threat to nations around the world. I've often quoted philosopher George Santayana who said: "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it." And to remember, we must first acknowledge what it is—Genocide.

As another scholar stated: "Denial of genocide is the final stage of genocide; it is what Elie Wiesel has called "double killing." Denial murders the dignity of the survivors and seeks to destroy the remembrance of the crime."

Tragically, more than 1.5 million Armenians were systematically murdered at the hands of the Young Turks. More than 500,000 were deported. It was brutal. It was deliberate. It was an organized campaign and it lasted more than 8 years. We must make certain that we remember.

Now, we must assure that the world recognizes that Armenian people have remembered, and they have survived and thrived.