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Dear Members of the United States Congress:

We write to you as the international organization of scholars who study genocide. We strongly urge you to co-sponsor H. Res. 106, the House Resolution recognizing and commemorating the Armenian Genocide.

In three previous statements of the International Association of Genocide Scholars—first, a unanimous resolution declaring that the Turkish massacres of Armenians in 1915-1918 constituted genocide; second, an Open Letter to Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan calling upon him to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide; and third, an Open Letter concerning scholars who deny the Armenian Genocide—we have made our position clear: the historical record on the Armenian Genocide is unambiguous and documented by overwhelming evidence. It is proven by foreign office records of the United States, France, Great Britain, Russia, and perhaps most importantly, of Turkey's World War I allies, Germany and Austria-Hungary, as well as by the records of the Ottoman Courts-Martial of 1918-1920, and by decades of scholarship.

We believe it is important for Members of Congress to understand that Turkey's nine-decade-long campaign to deny the facts of the Armenian Genocide is driven by a government that has yet to engage in the honest historical self-critique that is a vital part of the democratic process. The numerous trials and imprisonments of Turkish intellectuals and journalists and the assassination of the Armenian-Turkish journalist Hrant Dink in January make this clear. It should be noted that there are Turkish scholars who are urging their government to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide, and many parts of Turkish society share this pro-democratic perspective. We would note, however, that a government that still encourages extreme, uncritical nationalism has created a false narrative about the Armenian Genocide in order to absolve its predecessors of responsibility for the extermination of the Armenian people and their culture in the Ottoman Empire in 1915.

We are aware that you may be pressured by a small number of academics who support Turkey's denialist stance for often self-interested reasons. Such academics willingly falsify, distort, and manipulate the evidence in sometimes subtle ways to present a false view of history. These academics violate the ethical obligations of historical scholarship. We have noted that academics who deny the Armenian Genocide are no different than academics who deny the Holocaust, the Rwandan Genocide, or the Cambodian Genocide. The recent conference in Teheran devoted to Holocaust denial is a case in point. "Where scholars deny genocide in the face of decisive evidence . . . they contribute to false consciousness that can have the most dire reverberations. Their message, in effect, is . . . mass murder requires no confrontation, but should be ignored, glossed over. In this way scholars lend their considerable authority to the acceptance of this ultimate crime" (Roger Smith, Eric Markusen, Robert Jay Lifton "Professional Ethics and the Denial of the Armenian Genocide" *Journal of Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol.9, Spring, 1995).

We urge you to reject the Turkish campaign of denial, as you may be meeting with groups and individuals who are ardent deniers. We would underscore that the Armenian Genocide is not controversial, but rather is denied only by the Turkish government and its apologists.

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We urge you to pass H. Res. 106:

- 1) It is a recognition of an historical turning point in the twentieth century, the event that inaugurated the era of modern genocide. In spite of its importance, the Armenian Genocide has gone unrecognized until recently, and warrants a symbolic act of moral commemoration. The Armenian-American community first arrived in the United States as refugees and survivors of this great catastrophe and of earlier massacres in the late 19th century.
- 2) Congress will honor America's extraordinary foreign service officers (among them Leslie A. Davis, Jesse B. Jackson, Oscar Heizer, and Ambassador Henry Morgenthau) who often risked their lives rescuing Armenian citizens in 1915. These courageous American diplomats left behind some 4,000 reports totaling 37,000 pages, now in the National Archives, documents that prove the Armenian mass murders were government-planned, systematic extermination—what Raphael Lemkin named genocide. By this resolution the U.S. Congress would demonstrate that the moral principles and courage of those foreign service officers continues to represent a powerful example of American leadership. It is in the interest of the United States to support the principles of human rights that are at the core of American democracy.
- 3) Inasmuch as the popular effort in the United States to rescue and bring relief to the Armenians, first from massacres in the 1890s and then from genocide in 1915, set the stage for the era of modern human rights activism, H. Res. 106 would honor this significant contribution to United States history.
- 4) We expect that the United States would not permit foreign governments to intrude on its own legislative process. We also expect that the U.S. government would not be influenced by threats to close American military bases or cut off sales of military hardware, especially when that pressure comes from a country with a deeply disturbing human rights record today, including violence and repressive measures against writers, minorities, intellectuals, and scholars.
- 5) As crimes of genocide continue to plague the world, Turkey's policy of denying the Armenian Genocide gives license to those who perpetrate genocide everywhere. Just as we would not sanction denying the Holocaust, we cannot give credence to Turkey's falsification of the facts of 1915. Denial is the final stage of genocide, as it seeks to demonize the victims and rehabilitate the perpetrators.

We believe that it is in the interest of the Turkish people and their future as proud participants in the international democratic community to acknowledge the responsibility of a previous government for the genocide of the Armenian people, just as the German government has done in the case of the Holocaust.

We would be happy to meet with you in person, and would gladly supply you with the scholarly evidence that has led to the unanimous resolution of the International Association of Genocide Scholars that the Turkish massacre of over one million Armenians from 1915 to 1918 was a crime of genocide.

Sincerely,
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