

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues in commemorating the 85th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

On April 24, 1915, the Ottoman government unleashed an eight-year assault against its Armenian population. During this brutal campaign, one and a half million innocent men, women, and children were murdered, Armenian communities were systematically destroyed, and over one million people were forcibly deported.

The pain of these atrocities is only compounded by the Turkish government's revisionism and denial of the tragic events that took place. This is what Elie Wiesel has called a "double killing"—murdering the dignity of the survivors and the remembrance of the crime. It is incumbent upon us to stand up against these efforts and make United States records documenting this period available to students, historians, and the descendants of those who survived.

This somber anniversary is a tribute to the memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide, and a painful reminder that the world's inaction left a tragic precedent for other acts of senseless bloodshed. The road from Armenia to Auschwitz is direct. If more attention had been centered on the slaughter of these innocent men, women, and children, perhaps the events of the Holocaust might never have taken place.

Today, we vow once more that genocide will not go unnoticed and unmourned. We pledge to stand up against governments that persecute their own people, and declare our commitment to fight all crimes against humanity and the efforts to hide them from the rest of the world.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, today I join with my colleagues in what has become an annual event in which none of us take great joy in. Today, the Turkish government still denies the Armenian genocide and it does so to its own detriment. All of us would like to see the denial in Ankara end. The Armenian genocide happened. The historic fact, Mr. Speaker, is that 1.5 million Armenians were killed and over 500,000 deported from 1894 to 1921.

On April 24, 1915, 300 Armenian leaders, writers and intellectuals were rounded up, deported and killed. 5000 other poor Armenians were killed in their homes. The Turkish government continues to deny the Armenian genocide and claims that Armenians were only removed from the eastern war zone. America has been enriched in countless ways from the survivors of the Armenian genocide who have come here. As a representative from Michigan, I want to especially highlight that we have been blessed by the contributions of the Armenian communities.

Today I rise to call upon the Republic of Turkey, an ally of the United States, to admit what happened. Mr. Speaker, we want Turkey to see its history for what it is so it can see its future for what it can be. Let us all rise today to commemorate the Armenian genocide and hope that events like it never happen again.

Mrs. McCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with my colleagues to acknowledge the horrific events that occurred during the Armenian Genocide from 1915 to 1923, the final days of the Ottoman Empire.

The horror of the Genocide is seared in the minds of Armenians around the world. Beginning in 1915 the Ottoman Empire, ruled by

Muslim Turks, carried out a series of massacres in order to eliminate its Christian Armenian minority. By 1923, 1.5 million Armenians were brutally killed, while another 500,000 were deported. Stateless and penniless. Armenians were forced to move to any country that afforded refuge. Many found their way to the United States, while others escaped to countries such as Russia and France.

Future generations must be made aware of this historic event in our world history. It is unfortunate that the Republic of Turkey refuses to acknowledge the genocide against the Armenians. Innocent people were deprived of their freedom and senselessly killed because of their religious or political beliefs.

Armenia has made great strides to become an independent state. In 1992 the newly independent republic of Armenia, became a member of the United Nations, and in 1995 held their first open legislative elections.

Since the genocide, various acts of human rights violations have continued to take place around the world. If we ever hope to prevent further genocides we must never forget the atrocities endured by the Armenian people.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, today I come to the floor to commemorate the anniversary of one of the darkest stains on the history of Western Civilization—the genocide of the Armenian people by the Ottoman Turkish Empire. I greatly appreciate the strong support of so many of our colleagues in this effort, especially the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. PALLONE, my fellow co-chairman of the Armenian Issues Caucus.

I wish, as every Member does, that this Special Order did not have to take place. But every year, I return to the floor in April to speak out about the past. To fail to remember the past, not only dishonors the victims and survivors—it encourages future tyrants to believe that they can commit such heinous acts with impunity. Unfortunately, we have seen over and over the tragic results of hatred and ignorance: the Holocaust, the Rwandan Genocide, the ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, the continued mass killing in the Sudan and the massacres in East Timor last fall. And far too often the so-called civilized nations of the world turned a blind eye.

On April 24, 1915, over 200 Armenian religious, political and intellectual leaders were arrested in Istanbul and killed, marking the beginning of an 8-year campaign which resulted in the destruction of the ethnic Armenian community which had previously lived in Anatolia and Western Armenia. Between 1915 and 1923, approximately 1.5 million men, women and children were deported, forced into slave labor camps, tortured and eventually exterminated.

The Armenian Genocide was the first genocide of the modern age and has been recognized as a precursor of subsequent attempts to destroy a race through an official systematic effort. Congress has consistently demanded recognition of the historical fact of the Armenian Genocide. The modern German Government, although not itself responsible for the horrors of the Holocaust, has taken responsi-

bility for and apologized for it. Yet, the Turkish Government continues to deny that the Armenian genocide ever took place.

The past year has seen small steps of progress concerning Turkey's relationship with its neighbors. The devastating earthquakes of last summer in Turkey and subsequently Greece, allowed various nations in the region, including Armenia, to work together on humanitarian grounds. Turkey's EU candidacy is forcing it to face its problems both with its neighbors Greece, and Cyprus as well as internal problems such as its continuing human rights violations.

Although I am encouraged by these small steps, Turkey has yet to show the world that it is serious about solving the human rights problems within its borders. Remaining in jail are the Kurdish parliamentarians who were arrested over six years ago as well as numerous human rights workers. At the end of 1999, Turkey had the second highest number of journalists in jail—eighteen—the only country in the world with more was China. I sincerely hope Turkey's desire to become part of the EU community will require Turkey to improve its internal human rights problems as well as face its past and acknowledge its role in one of the 20th centuries greatest tragedies—the Armenian Genocide.

Armenians will remain vigilant to ensure that this tragic history is not repeated. The United States should do all that it can in this regard as well, including a clear message about the historical fact of the Armenian Genocide. We do Turkey no favors by enabling her self-delusion, and we make ourselves hypocrites when we fail to sound the alarm on what is happening today in Turkey.

Armenia has made amazing progress in rebuilding a society and a nation—a triumph of the human spirit in the face of dramatic obstacles. Armenia is committed to democracy, market economics and the rule of law. Even in the face of the tragedy which befell the Armenian Government last October, where eight people were murdered in the parliament including the Prime Minister Sarkisian, the Armenian Government and its people remain committed to freedom and democracy. I will continue to take a strong stand in Congress in support of these principles and respect for human rights, and I am proud to stand with Armenia in so doing. We must never forget what happened to the Armenians 85 years ago, just as we must never overlook the human rights violations which are happening today in all corners of the world.

1730

IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE ARMENIAN HOLOCAUST

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOSSELLA). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. TIERNEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to commemorate one of the most tragic events in the 20th century and that is, of course, the Armenian Genocide of 1915 to 1923. It ranks amongst the most tragic episodes. It was the first but unfortunately not the last of the incidents of ethnic genocide that the world experienced during the last

century. More than one and a half million innocent Armenians had their lives ended mercilessly.

It is staggering to even contemplate the idea of one and a half million people having their lives ended so arbitrarily, but we must remember the victims of this genocide as they were, not numbers but mothers and fathers and sons and daughters, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins and, of course, friends. Each and every victim had hopes, dreams, and a life that deserved to be lived to the fullest.

It is our duty to remember them today and every day. As we stand here today at the beginning of a new century and a new millennium, we should take a moment to speak about the need that that tragic event serves as a constant reminder for us to be on guard against the repression of any people, particularly any oppression based on their race or their religion.

Unfortunately, during the genocide, the world turned a blind eye to the horrors that were inflicted. Too often during the last century the world stood silent while whole races and religions were attacked and nearly annihilated. As the saying goes, those who forget history are doomed to repeat it. We must never forget the important lessons of the Armenian Genocide.

As a member, Mr. Speaker, of the Congressional Armenian Caucus, I join many others in the House of Representatives working hopefully to bring peace and stability to Armenia and its neighboring countries. Division and hatred can only lead to more division and hatred, as has too often been proved. Hopefully the work of the caucus and of others committed to the same cause will help ensure that an atrocity such as the genocide will never happen again in Armenia or elsewhere.

While I might not be Armenian, Mr. Speaker, my wife is and many, many of our friends, which causes me, of course, to say "yes odar empaytz seerdus high e."

I am not Armenian but my heart is, and we all should have our heart with them on this particular occasion.

WE MUST REMEMBER THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE SO THAT IT NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN

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

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, like many of my colleagues, I rise to remember the Armenian Genocide which took place over several years, but the remembrance day is to remember an event 85 years ago, so this is a particularly important anniversary of that genocide.

We are asked why it is so important to come to this floor again and again to remember. We must remember so that it never happens again, and we must remember because there is an organized effort to hide and to disclaim

this genocide; and we must overcome that effort, and we must never forget.

Let us look at the historical record. The American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in 1919 was an eyewitness. In his memoirs, he said, "When the Turkish authorities gave the order for these deportations they were merely giving the death warrant to an entire race. They understood this well and in their conversations with me made no particular attempt to conceal this fact."

He went on to describe what he saw at the Euphrates River, and he said, as our eyes and ears in the Ottoman Empire, because that is the role an ambassador plays, in the year 1919, "I have by no means told the most terrible details, for a complete narration of the sadistic orgies of which they, the Armenian men and women, are victims can never be printed in an American publication. Whatever crimes the most perverted instincts of the human mind can devise, whatever refinements of persecution and injustice the most debased imagination can conceive, became the daily misfortune of the Armenian people."

As other speakers have pointed out, this was the first genocide of the 20th century, and it laid the foundation for the Holocaust to follow.

We can never forget that 8 days before he invaded Poland, Adolf Hitler turned to his inner circle and said, "Who today remembers the extermination of the Armenians?" The impunity with which the Turkish government acted in annihilating the Armenian people emboldened Adolf Hitler and his inner circle to carry out the Holocaust of the Jewish people. Unfortunately, today there is an organized effort to expunge from the memory of the human race this genocide, and it focuses on our academic institutions.

Mr. Speaker, I am a proud graduate of UCLA; and a few years ago UCLA was offered a million dollars to create a special chair that would be under the partial control of the Turkish government, a chair in history that would have been used to cover up and to disclaim and to deny the first genocide of the 20th century.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of UCLA for many things. I was there when Bill Walton led us to the NCAA championship, but I was never prouder of my alma mater than when UCLA said no to a million dollars; and it is important that every American academic institution say no to genocide denial.

It is also important that the State Department go beyond shallow, hollow reminders and remembrances of this day and step forward and use the word genocide in describing the genocide of the Armenian people at the hands of the Turks.

It is time for Turkey to acknowledge this genocide, because only in that way can they rise above it. The German government has been quite forthcoming in acknowledging the Holoc-

caust, and in doing so it has at least been respected by the peoples of the world for its honesty. Turkey should follow that example rather than trying to buy chairs at American universities to deny history.

Mr. Speaker, we must go beyond merely remembering the Armenian Genocide and also insist that the survivors of that genocide are treated justly, that the people of Armenia and Artsakh enjoy freedom and independence; and we must end the blockade of Armenia imposed by Turkey.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to this genocide, we must say, and say loudly, never again and never forget.

WHAT DO WE WANT CHINA TO BE 20 YEARS FROM NOW OR EVEN 50 YEARS FROM NOW?

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

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, I would like to associate myself with the remarks of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, remembering the genocide of the Armenians, but I would like to add this: that there are Armenian children dying today in Armenia. While other nations brutalize Armenia, the White House and State Department cut funds for Armenia. They are not the only White House and State Department to do so, but there is enough of us, instead of making just a resolution, to make a binding resolution for the White House to do something about it.

Also, I should speak to another event I had not planned on speaking to tonight, but I actually resent some of the statements made earlier tonight. My wife and daughters attend Catholic mass at Saint James Parish, and the speaker of this House took the well and shamed those Democrats that would use religion for political gain. I heard this again tonight. I ask the minority leader to ask to put an end to their side of using religion for politics. It does not belong in this Chamber. I have attended events at synagogues, at parishes and churches, but what I would not attend is a fund-raiser at a Buddhist temple.

The real reason I came tonight, Mr. Speaker, was to talk about PNTR for China. I would like to present some thoughts. China is a rogue nation. The issue generates strong-held opinions on both sides and both Republicans and Democrats are split on this particular issue. Even myself, I personally struggled, knowing what a rogue nation that China is, the human rights violations, the national security threats, and what does it mean applying PNTR to China.

Communication is the shortest distance between two points of view, and I know that my mother, my children and many Americans, if they never hear some of the positive points, they are most likely not going to support trade with China.