

mourners gathered on the hilltop over the city of Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, to remember the Armenian genocide.

Here in the United States, in the Capitol, we also are remembering. It often seems that the world has not learned the crucial lessons of the past. We have witnessed awful genocides in nearly every corner of the globe, including the Holocaust of the Jews in Europe, and genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, and Bosnia.

We must pause today and say, "Never again." We must, because the cost of the alternative is too high.

Eighty-six years ago in 1915, 1.5 million Armenians were killed; 300 Armenian leaders, writers, thinkers and professionals in Constantinople, modern day Istanbul, were rounded up, deported and killed. 5,000 of the poorest Armenians were butchered in the streets and in their homes.

Most Armenians in America are children or grandchildren of those survivors although there are still many survivors amongst us today. I sometimes hear voices that ask, "You know, after all of these years, why do we need to keep addressing this?" After all, some of the skeptics say, this was something that ended back in 1915 and the 1920s.

I suppose that someone who thinks of genocide with that kind of detachment, as if it were just something in a textbook, some distant memory, as something that happened far away and long ago to a people that they never knew, that argument might sound reasonable. But the reason we are here today with my colleagues is because we know better, because we know that 1.5 million men, women and children who were murdered in the genocide are not some abstraction, are not some number in a textbook. To those who survived them, they were beloved family members and dear friends. They were our fathers and mothers and grandparents and uncles and aunts and confidants and neighbors. They were individuals who were robbed of their dignity, they were robbed of their humanity; and finally, they were robbed of their lives.

While time has made the events more distant, the pain is no less real today than it has ever been. How can it be otherwise when we hear the stories of the survivors. How can it be when we are haunted by the words of women like Katharine Magarian. Just listen. Three years ago she said, "I saw my father killed when I was 9 years old. We lived in an Armenian enclave in Turkey in the mountains. My father was a businessman. The Turks, they ride in one day, got all of the men together and brought them to the church. Every man came out with hands tied behind them. They slaughtered them, like sheep, with long knives.

"They all die. Twenty-five people in my family die. You cannot walk, they kill you. You walk, they kill you. They did not care who they killed. My husband, who was a boy in my village but

I did not know him then, he saw his mother's head cut off," and she goes on describing the atrocities that befell her and her family.

To most Americans these stories are things that, maybe, you have heard about or read about. But anyone who grew up in an Armenian American family will tell you they knew about these stories their whole life. They may not have always known the specifics, but they always knew about the pain and hurt and tears. They know there were members of their family who died. Why did they die? Because they were Armenian.

Mr. Speaker, that is why we commemorate the genocide. It is not because we cannot let go of history, it is because history will not let go of us. We know that silence does not bind up wounds, it only leaves those wounds to fester. Because we understand if Turkey is never held accountable for the crimes it committed in the past, it only becomes more certain that those crimes will occur again in the future.

Some in Congress and the White House believe that by speaking out on the genocide, America would be betraying the Turkish government. By failing to speak out, we are betraying our own principles as a free people. We cannot sit idle. We cannot let Turkey hide within a fortress of lies.

Mr. Speaker, that is why we will be introducing our resolution on the Armenian genocide. I would like to share an old Armenian saying with you. The saying is: "Many a molehill thinks it is a mountain. But the mountain? Mountains are too busy being mountains, doing mountain-type things and thinking mountain-type thoughts to worry about what being a mountain means."

I think of America as sometimes being a bit like that mountain. We are a Nation that is so busy with our economy, our culture and politics, we sometimes forget what it is like to be really an American, what it means to be an American. And the way I see it, America means standing up for justice. America means speaking out against injustice.

□ 1900

That is what I urge all of my colleagues to do, and join me in recognizing the Armenian genocide and supporting the resolution.

Recognizing inhumanity is the first step toward healing and understanding. The current tensions between Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Armenia are deeply rooted in his history, and achieving a just and lasting peace and cooperation will only be possible if the past is acknowledged. But it will not happen on its own. That's why congressional action on the Armenian Genocide resolution is so important.

I believe that those of us who stand for human rights and dignity have a responsibility to remember the victims and the survivors. We have a responsibility to speak out and to make sure that tragedies like this are never allowed to happen again.

In remembering the Armenian Genocide, we are making a commitment against genocide

and discrimination. We are making a personal commitment to speaking out against injustice wherever we see it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ROGERS of Michigan). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

COMMEMORATING ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be here this evening to honor my Armenian friends, particularly on the eve of the 86th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

The 20th century was one of historic progress, but also horrible brutality. Throughout the century, America has also been the source of this progress, as well as the nation of first resort to combat brutality around the world. The first great American diplomatic and humanitarian initiative of the 20th century was in response to the attempted extermination of the Armenian people.

As I did last year on this date, I want to associate my comments with the comments of the Jerusalem Post which said, "The 1915 wholesale massacre of the Armenians by the Ottoman Turks remains a core experience of the Armenian nation. While there is virtually zero tolerance for Holocaust denial, there is tacit acceptance of the denial of the Armenian Genocide, in part because the Turks have managed to structure this debate so that people question whether this really did happen."

It is fact that the death of 1.5 million Armenians by execution or starvation really did happen, and we must not tolerate this denial.

Mr. Speaker, I say we must affirm history, not bury it. We must learn from history, not reshape it according to the geostrategic needs of the moment, and we must refuse to be intimidated or other states with troubled pasts will ask that the American record on their dark chapter in history be expunged.

As Members of this body, we have an obligation to educate and familiarize Americans on the Armenian Genocide.