

mark the importance of environmental protection and responsible living. As the leaders of this great Nation, we must collaborate in a bipartisan fashion to promote environmental policies that make sense to this country. We do not want to continue to drink water that is contaminated and polluted. We do not want to breathe smoke-filled air. We do not want to develop life-threatening diseases from water, air, and other environmental hazards. Poor environmental management affects everyone, and environmental justice does, in fact, matter.

We ask, how many children must develop lead poisoning before we get serious about that issue. Do we want the Nation's most precious animals to perish from the Earth? Do we want to live in neighborhoods that are surrounded by nuclear power plants? Do we want to breathe a thick layer of smog from contaminated air before we feel that a clean air policy is important? Will there come a time when we must go to the local grocery store and purchase bottled air?

Many of our urban communities are currently in serious unrest due to many different environmental problems. Today we must make a new dedication toward bringing a more proper balance to the widening gap between community standards based upon their economic status. People in our poorest communities are struggling for environmental justice, from Louisiana's "Cancer Alley" to the Native American reservations' nuclear problems to the people along the border in the maquiladora region, and for the communities where I live on the south and west sides of Chicago.

Furthermore, millions of people live in housing surrounded by physical environments that are overburdened with environmental problems and hazards untold, waste, toxins, dioxins, incinerators, petrochemical plants, polluted air and unsafe drinking water. These factors all combine to pose a real and grave threat to the future of our Nation's public health.

So, as we mark the 31st anniversary of the first Earth Day, we glory in the progress that has been made, but must strive to continue to develop strong environmental policies that help protect our Earth.

COMMEMORATION OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor on this very special and important day to join my colleagues and individuals throughout the world in commemorating the 86th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. We must never forget the tragedy of the Armenian Genocide, and this commemoration makes an important contribution to making sure that we never do.

When most people hear the word "genocide" they immediately think of Hitler and his persecution of the Jews during World War II. Many individuals are unaware that the first genocide of the 20th century occurred during World War I and was perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire against the Armenian people.

Concerned that the Armenian people would move to establish their own government, the Ottoman Empire embarked on a reign of terror that resulted in the massacre of over 1.5 million Armenians, men, women and children. This atrocious crime began on April 15, 1915, when the Ottoman Empire arrested, exiled, and eventually killed hundreds of Armenian religious, political, and intellectual leaders.

Once they had eliminated the Armenian people's leadership, they turned their attention to the Armenians that were serving in the Ottoman army. These soldiers were disarmed and placed in labor camps where they were either starved or executed. The Armenian people, lacking political leadership and deprived of young, able-bodied men who could fight against the Ottoman onslaught were then deported from every region of Turkish Armenia. The images of human suffering from the Armenian Genocide are graphic and as haunting as the pictures of the Holocaust.

Why, then, it must be asked, are so many people unaware of the Armenian Genocide? I believe the answer is found in the international community's response to this disturbing event or, I should say, lack of response. At the end of World War I, those responsible for ordering and implementing the Armenian Genocide were never brought to justice, and the world casually forgot about the suffering and pain of the Armenian people, and that proved to be a grave mistake. In a speech that is now recorded, a speech made by Adolf Hitler just prior to the invasion of Poland in 1939, he justified his brutal tactics with the infamous statement, "Who remembers the extermination of the Armenians?"

Tragically, 6 years later, the Nazis had exterminated 6 million Jews. Never has the phrase, "those who forget the past will be destined to repeat it" been more applicable. If the international community had spoken out against this merciless slaughtering of the Armenian people instead of ignoring it, the horrors of the Holocaust might never have taken place.

Mr. Speaker, as we commemorate the 86th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, I believe it is time to give this event its rightful place in history. This afternoon and this evening, let us pay homage to those who fell victim to the Ottoman oppressors and tell the story, the story of the forgotten genocide. This, for the sake of the Armenian heritage, is certainly a story that must be heard.

ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA

Washington, DC.

The Armenian Assembly of America, Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide

On April 24, we remember and mourn the victims of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Not a single family went untouched; none were spared the pain of that brutal slaughter. Because its victims and witnesses were ignored and its lessons unlearned, the Genocide set the stage for the Holocaust and the genocides that followed. The 20th century's first genocide continues to cast its dark shadow over the 21st century.

The Turkish people and the Republic of Turkey should recognize that it is in their own best interest to come to terms with the role their Ottoman predecessors played in the Armenian Genocide and reject denial. No other country in the world should support Turkey's indefensible position. There is a growing awareness and understanding of this fact, even within Turkey itself. We were encouraged this year by reports from Turkey that public discussion of the topic has increased significantly.

It is our hope that the Turkish people, confronted with international recognition and spurred by desire to finally join the European family of nations, will reconcile with their past. Such reconciliation will lay the groundwork to build a better future.

HIRAIR HOVNANIAN,
Chairman, Board of
Trustees.

VAN Z. KRİKORIAN,
Chairman, Board of
Directors.

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

(Mr. FILNER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

REMEMBERING THE 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 would like to commend those who join me tonight in educating the world about the Armenian Genocide. I think I bring some special province to this occasion in that I am the grandson of Oscar Chaderjain, a first-generation Armenian American, and the son of Mary Chaderjain. So therefore, this is an issue that is near and dear to my heart.

Mr. Speaker, for those who question whether the genocide ever occurred in the first instance, I must say that I have no doubt that it did. My grandfather was a first-hand witness to the bloodshed. He often told us of his experience of holding his uncle's arms, with his cousin, as Turkish soldiers executed that grammar school teacher. He also told us that the world first took notice of the genocide on April 24, 1915, when 254 Armenian intellectuals were arrested by Turkish authorities in Istanbul and taken to the distant provinces of Ayash and Chankiri, where many of them were later massacred.

Throughout the genocide, Turkish authorities ordered the evacuation of

Armenians out of villages in Turkish Armenia and Asia Minor. As they were evacuated, the men were often shot immediately. Prisoners were starved, beaten, and murdered by unmerciful guards.

This was not the case for everyone, though. Not everyone was sent to concentration camps. For example, in Trebizond, many innocent people were put on ships and then thrown overboard into the Black Sea.

The atrocities of the Armenian Genocide were still being carried out in 1921 when Kemalists were found abusing and starving prisoners to death. In total, as has been pointed out, over 1.5 million Armenians were killed. This does not include the half a million or more who were forced to flee their homes and flee to foreign countries.

Mr. Speaker, together with Armenians all over the world and people of conscience, I would like to honor those who lost their homes, their freedom and their lives during this dark period. Many survivors of the genocide came to the United States seeking a new beginning, my grandfather among them. The experiences of his childhood so fueled his desire for freedom for his Armenian homeland that in the first world war he returned there where he was awarded two medals of honor for bravery in his fight against fascism.

It is important that we do not forget about these terrible atrocities because, as other speakers have said and as Winston Churchill said, "Those who do not learn from the past are destined to repeat it."

For those in America who think this is only a sad story, and it certainly is a sad story, they need to take note that Armenia has taken great strides in achieving its independence over the past 8 years.

□ 1915

Once it was a captive nation struggling to preserve its centuries-old customs. Today the Republic of Armenia is an independent, freedom-loving nation and a friend to the United States and to the democratic world.

Let us remember today, April 24, 2001, marks the 86th anniversary of one of the most gruesome human atrocities of the 20th century. Sadly, it was the systematic killing of 1.5 million Armenian men, women, and children.

Let us remember that prior to his invasion of Poland in 1939 and subsequent Nazi oppression, Adolph Hitler attempted to justify his own actions by simply stating, "After all, who remembers the Armenians?" As we do not ignore the occurrence of the Nazi Holocaust, we must not ignore the Armenian genocide.

I believe many people across the world will concede this is a very tender and difficult event to discuss. What we do tonight is not to condemn the Turkish people. Rather, it is to recognize the actions of the past and past wrongs in order to ensure that we do not repeat them.

However, as a strong, fervent supporter of the Republic of Armenia, I am alarmed that Turkish Government officials still refuse to acknowledge what happened, and instead are attempting to rewrite history.

It is vital that we do not let political agendas get in the way of doing what is right. I will continue to call upon the Turkish Government to accept complete accountability for the Armenian genocide. To heal the wounds of the past, the Turkish Government must first recognize its responsibility for actions of past leaders.

Nothing we can do or say, Mr. Speaker, will bring back those who perished; but we can honor those who lost their homes, their freedom, and their lives by teaching future generations the lessons of the atrocities.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO THOSE LOST IN THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening, as my colleagues and I do every year at this time, in a proud but solemn tradition to remember and pay tribute to the victims of one of history's worst crimes against humanity, the Armenian genocide of 1929 through 1933.

The genocide began 86 years ago today. Mr. Speaker, I have long supported legislation that would put the U.S. House of Representatives officially on the record in recognizing the Armenian genocide.

Last fall, the bipartisan Armenian genocide bill was approved by the Committee on International Relations by a vote of 24 to 11. On October 19 of last year, the legislation was finally scheduled for a vote on the House floor. I am confident that if the vote had ever occurred, the Armenian genocide legislation would have passed with overwhelming bipartisan support.

In a last-minute effort to ensure the legislation never came to the floor for a vote, the Turkish Government sent a threat to President Clinton that American soldiers stationed in the region would be in jeopardy if a vote ever took place. This threat was enough for President Clinton to send a letter to the Speaker of this House requesting that the legislation be pulled from the schedule.

Essentially, the Speaker and President Clinton, and therefore the government of the United States, both executive and legislative, succumbed to the threats of the Turkish Government. I believe this was shameful. Italy and France did not give in to the Turkish Government last year when both these nations approved an Armenian genocide resolution.

I am also proud that State and local governments here in the United States are stepping out in front of the Federal

Government on this issue. Earlier this month, Maryland approved an Armenian genocide resolution, becoming the 27th State to make such a recognition.

Congress, Mr. Speaker, should not be forced by a foreign government to deny or ignore the U.S. record and response to the events that took place in the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1923. Those of us who have been fighting for this recognition will not give up. We are committed, and we will not quit fighting until this Nation finally recognizes the Armenian genocide as genocide.

President Bush had a golden opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to recognize the genocide today in annual statements made by the President. From statements that candidate Bush made, one would have believed as President he would use the word "genocide" today. But sadly, today, the President chose not to use the word "genocide," thus minimizing the events from 1915 to 1923 that we commemorate this evening.

I know many Armenian-Americans will feel betrayed because of President Bush's inaction today. In public statements and letters to Armenian organizations and individuals during his Presidential campaign, Bush said, "The 20th century was marred by wars of unimaginable brutality, mass murders, and genocide. History records that the Armenians were the first people of the last century to have endured these cruelties."

Bush went on to say, "If elected President, I would ensure that our Nation properly recognizes the tragic suffering of the Armenian people." But it is unfortunate that the President did not stand by these words today.

I am trying not to be partisan here, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, I am disappointed with President Bush, as I was disappointed with President Clinton before him.

For anyone who has any doubts about the truth of the Armenian genocide, they can just go down the street to the National Archives, where volumes of historical records prove what really happened. Five years from now, we will have the opportunity to visit a genocide museum here in Washington. The museum, which will be located at 14th and G streets in the Northwest area of our Nation's Capital, will be a permanent reminder of the atrocities of 1915 to 1923.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the remarks of my friend, Ross Vartian, the director of planning for this new museum, who discussed this issue.

The statement by Mr. Vartian is as follows:

STATEMENT BY ROSS VARTIAN, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING, ARMENIAN NATIONAL INSTITUTE, KNIGHTS OF VARTAN TIMES SQUARE MARTYR'S DAY EVENT, APRIL 22, 2001

The Armenian National Institute, or ANI, extends its deep appreciation to the Knights of Vartan for once again organizing this year's Martyr's Day Commemoration. We recognize the leadership of Grand Commander Robert Barsam, this event's Chairman Sam Azadian, Martyr's Day Committee