

Administration of Barack Obama, 2013

Statement on Armenian Remembrance Day

April 24, 2013

Today we commemorate the Meds Yeghern and honor those who perished in one of the worst atrocities of the 20th century. Ninety-eight years ago, 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their deaths in the final days of the Ottoman Empire. We pause to reflect on the lives extinguished and remember the unspeakable suffering that occurred. In so doing, we are joined by millions across the world and in the United States, where it is solemnly commemorated by our States, institutions, communities, and families. We also remind ourselves of our commitment to ensure that such dark chapters of history are not repeated.

I have consistently stated my own view of what occurred in 1915, and my view has not changed. A full, frank, and just acknowledgement of the facts is in all of our interests. Nations grow stronger by acknowledging and reckoning with painful elements of the past, thereby building a foundation for a more just and tolerant future. We appreciate this lesson in the United States, as we strive to reconcile some of the darkest moments in our own history. We recognize those courageous Armenians and Turks who have already taken this path and encourage more to do so, with the backing of their Governments and mine.

The history and legacy of the Armenian people is marked by an indomitable spirit and a great resiliency in the face of tremendous adversity and suffering. The United States is stronger for the contributions Armenian Americans have made to our society, our culture, and our communities. In small measure, we return that contribution by supporting the Armenian people as they work toward building a nation that would make their ancestors proud: one that cherishes democracy and respect for human liberty and dignity.

Today we stand with Armenians everywhere in recalling the horror of the Meds Yeghern, honoring the memory of those lost, and affirming our enduring commitment to the people of Armenia.

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