



ASSEMBLY OF TURKISH AMERICAN ASSOCIATIONS

Congressman Howard Berman
Chairman, House Foreign Affairs Committee
2221 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

March 11, 2010

Re: H.Res 252

Dear Chairman Berman:

On behalf of the members of the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA), I am gravely disappointed in your leadership regarding H.Res. 252 last Thursday, March 4, 2010.

The motion, which narrowly passed 23-22, required a controversial hours-long extension of the voting period. More controversial is the mockery it made of the American foreign policy process and the hindrance it imposed on U.S. relations with Turkey.

Since the Committee vote, it is now difficult to expect the Turkish public to support ratification of the Turkey – Armenia protocols, since it was the United States that shepherded their signing by Turkish and Armenian leaders last fall. Regrettably, narrow ethnic politics has trumped the national interests of the United States and upset a delicate bilateral peace process.

H.Res. 252 legislates history and a criminal conviction, neither of which are functions delegated to the Congress by the U.S. Constitution. Particularly at a time when the United States is struggling to restore its credibility in the world, your “yes” vote denied people of Turkish and Muslim heritage fundamental dignity.

While H.Res. 252 relied on a biased selection of items from the U.S. Record that favor the perspective of the Armenian American lobby, its promotion at the HFAC relied on many misleading statements. I address only three:

1. UN Position: Contrary to your introductory statement, the United Nations has never accepted the Armenian case as genocide. Indeed, in 2000, U.N. Spokesman Farhan Haq announced unequivocally, “The United Nations has *not approved or endorsed* a report labeling the Armenian experience as Genocide.” Frustrated with the false statements of the Armenian American lobby, in 2007 Mr. Haq expressed, “As for Armenia, the UN has *not expressed any position* on incidents that took place long before the United Nations was established.”

2. Hitler Quote: The Nurnberg Tribunals impeached and excluded as evidence the set of notes that included the Hitler quote that many “yes” voters recited during the HFAC mark up. In any event, Hitler should not be relied upon as an expert witness on the Armenian matter.

3. Raphael Lemkin: During the drafting of the United Nations Genocide Convention, Raphael Lemkin lobbied for the inclusion of political groups under the protection of the Convention. The U.N. Sub-Commission, however, rejected this expansive protection. Thereafter, Lemkin did not participate in the Sub-Commission. Lemkin’s expansive approach would have lead to the inclusion of political parties, civilian militias, terrorists groups, insurgency groups, revolutionary groups, and entire national armies under the protection of the Genocide Convention. Lemkin’s broad prohibitions would have caused overlapping with other international and domestic laws that protect civilians, non-combatants, combatants, insurgents, and prisoners of war from human rights violations. Such a loose definition would have included violent nationalist movements such as the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) who engaged in terrorism, insurgency and civil war against the Ottoman Empire between 1880-1919, and which assisted the Russian invasion of the Ottoman Empire in 1915. It would have included Ottoman Armenian civilians who materially and physically supported the armed movement during which more than one million Ottomans Muslims perished in Ottoman eastern Anatolia alone.

We do not believe that this matter should be considered by the full House. However, if it does proceed to a floor vote, we hope you will reconsider your position for the larger benefit of sustainable, truth-based reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia, and productive U.S. relations in the critical region of Turkey.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gunay Evinch
President
Assembly of Turkish American Associations
1526 18th Street
Washington DC 20036
(202) 483-9090