



ASSEMBLY OF TURKISH AMERICAN ASSOCIATIONS

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

March 11, 2010

Dear Mr. President:

As a leading voice of over a half million proud Americans of Turkish heritage and many more Americans who support the U.S. – Turkish model partnership, the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA) urges that you continue to discourage a Congressional vote on House Resolution 252, which narrowly passed the House Foreign Affairs Committee by a vote of 23-22 on March 4, 2010.

That H.Res. 252 so narrowly passed out of HFAC indicates that Congress remains deeply divided on this measure and its underpinnings. By asking Chairman Berman not to promote the resolution, you have signaled your understanding that the resolution is misguided and incriminates a key ally, Turkey, and a key heritage community, the Turkish Americans. As has been demonstrated by the recall of the Turkish Ambassador, the mere commencement of a consideration of this matter by the U.S. legislature is likely to severely disrupt US-Turkish relations, as well as derail the ratification of the Armenia – Turkey Protocols in which you have so wisely invested.

The United States and Turkey enjoy a model partnership, whose pillars include the fight against global terrorism, efforts for peace and stability in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and the broader Balkans and Middle East, and democratic and economic development from Africa to Central Asia. The United States and Turkey are also important trade partners, as U.S. exports to Turkey are more than \$10 billion and create thousands of American jobs.

The United States must speak with one voice on Turkish – Armenian reconciliation. We cannot simultaneously encourage ratification of the Protocols while prejudicing the outcomes of one of their elements – the envisaged joint historical commission. Rather, your assessment offered to the Turkish Parliament on April 6, 2009 ought to remain the basis for U.S. policy on this matter: “[T]he best way forward for the Turkish and Armenian people is a process that works through the past in a way that is honest, open and constructive.”

The Turkish people will now be interested to see whether your Administration will restore America’s credibility as a neutral party and supporter of the Protocols, or permit further deterioration by Congress action or in an April 24 statement.

The ATAA respectfully submits that you please:

1. Make a public statement that H.Res. 252 should not be submitted to a floor vote;
2. Openly and unambiguously support the delicate rapprochement that is currently underway between Turkey and Armenia, while standing firmly against any action by other parts of the United States government that might pose an obstacle.

The ATAA further submits respectfully that any statement or proclamation you may offer on April 24, continue United States policy not to characterize the Armenian case in terms of a crime, as well as initiate a new United States policy to remember and honor the more than one million Ottoman Muslims who perished in eastern Anatolia during the Armenian Revolt (1880-1919) under identical conditions of war that effected Ottoman Armenians.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

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President
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