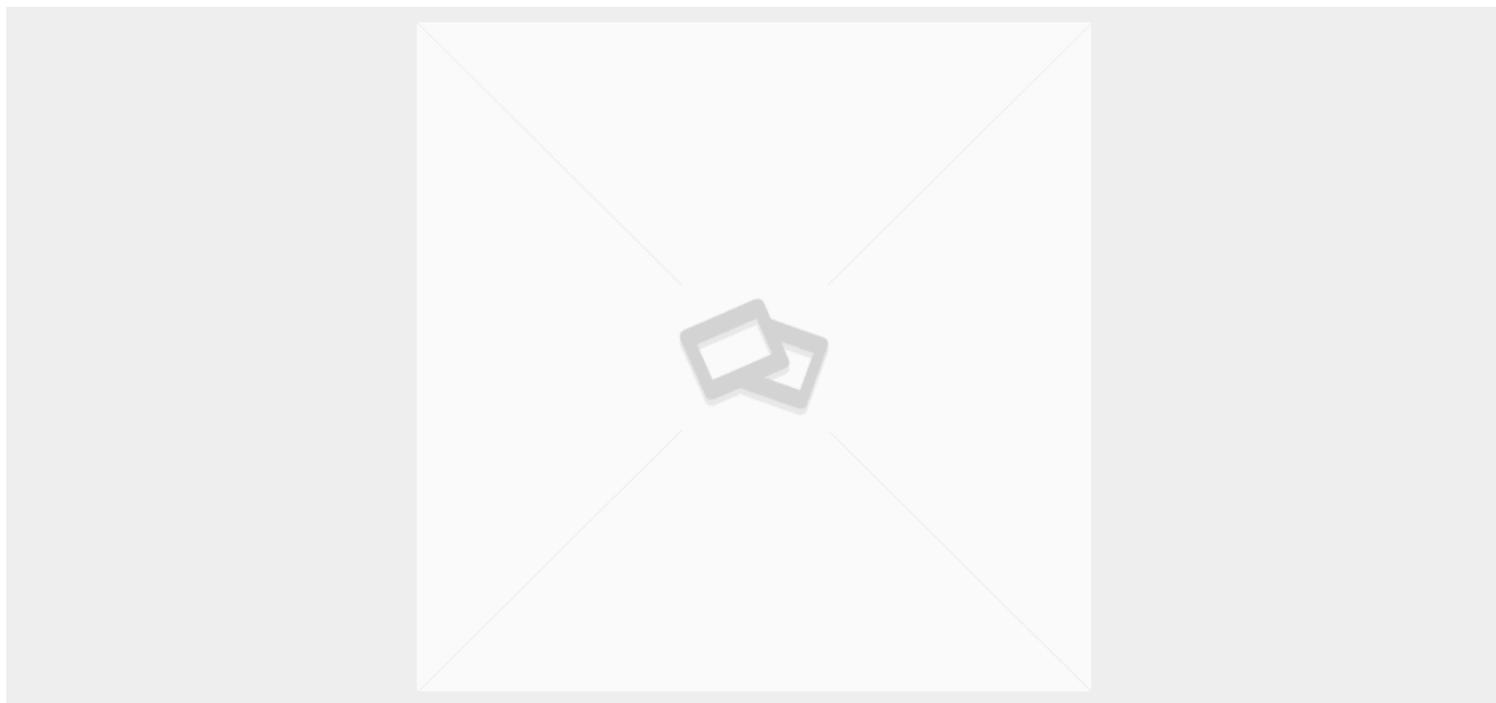


GENOCIDE SCHOLARS URGE OBAMA TO RECOGNIZE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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WASHINGTON (A.W.)—Earlier this month, the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) sent a letter to President Barack Obama urging him to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

The letter, signed by IAGS president Gregory Stanton, read: "We write to you as the leading international organization of scholars who study genocide. As April approaches, we urge you to 'refer to the mass slaughter of Armenians as genocide in your commemorative statement,' as you urged President George W. Bush to do in a letter dated March 18, 2005."

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"By acknowledging the Armenian Genocide, you would demonstrate that you are that 'leader' you referred to on Jan. 19, 2008, who 'speaks truthfully about the Armenian Genocide and responds forcefully to all genocides.' You would signal a new chapter in U.S. diplomacy. You would also honor the truth of our own valiant history, which saw brave and selfless Foreign Service Officers risk their lives rescuing Armenians during the genocide and compiling the more than 40,000 pages of documentation now housed in the National Archives," the letter concluded.

The IAGS is a global, interdisciplinary, non-partisan organization that seeks to further research and teaching about the nature, causes, and consequences of genocide, and advance policy studies on prevention of genocide. Founded in 1994, it meets to consider comparative research, important new work, case studies, the links between genocide and other human rights violations, and prevention and punishment of genocide. A central aim of the association is to draw academics, activists, artists, genocide survivors, journalists, jurists, public policy makers, and other colleagues into the interdisciplinary study of genocide, with the goal of prevention.

Below is the full text of the letter.

Dear President Obama:

We write to you as the leading international organization of scholars who study genocide. As April approaches, we urge you to "refer to the mass slaughter of Armenians as genocide in your

commemorative statement," as you urged President George W. Bush to do in a letter dated March 18, 2005.

On Jan. 19, 2008 you voiced your conviction "that the Armenian Genocide is not an allegation, a personal opinion, or a point of view, but rather a widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming body of historical evidence." We hope that you will be able to affirm that conviction this April.

We are confident that you know and value the historical record on the Armenian Genocide, but want to underscore that this human rights history was a watershed for the modern age because:

- 1) it was the template for all modern genocide—Adolph Hitler was so impressed with the Turkish extermination of the Armenians that it figured in his own genocidal plans, as he exhorted his military advisors in 1939: "Who today, after all, remembers the annihilation of the Armenians?"
- 2) Raphael Lemkin, who created the concept of genocide as a crime of international law, did so in large part on the basis of what happened to the Armenians in 1915
- 3) the 94-year denial of the Armenian Genocide has emboldened perpetrators ever since
- 4) American efforts to rescue the Armenians from massacre from the 1890's through the 1920's set the stage for the modern era of human rights activism, and is a proud and important chapter in U. S. history.

We are concerned that Turkey's lobbying efforts, which are now in full force, will lead to a repetition of the H.Res.106 debacle of late 2007, when the President, as usual, got the resolution blocked from a House vote. A merely symbolic commemorative resolution, which looked like it would pass in the House, was subverted by unethical pressure, coercion, and cajoling by Turkey, a member of NATO and home of an important airbase. The intellectual freedom of our country cannot be held hostage by a foreign government, particularly by one with the worst human rights record in NATO. Twenty other nations, including NATO members France, Poland, Greece, and Germany, have disregarded Turkey's coercion, issued commemorative statements, and proven that Turkey's threats are nothing more than threats.

By acknowledging the Armenian Genocide, you would demonstrate that you are that "leader" you referred to on Jan. 19, 2008, who "speaks truthfully about the Armenian Genocide and responds forcefully to all genocides." You would signal a new chapter in U.S. diplomacy. You would also honor the truth of our own valiant history, which saw brave and selfless Foreign Service Officers risk their lives rescuing Armenians during the Genocide and compiling the more than 40,000 pages of documentation now housed in the National Archives.

Sincerely,

Gregory Stanton, President

International Association of Genocide Scholars

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