

OPEN LETTER TO SENATOR EDWARD MARKEY

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Ara A. Jeknavorian, Ph.D., MA, 30 April 2014

Dear Senator Markey:

I am writing on behalf of the Armenian National Committee of America, Merrimac Valley.

You are a long-time friend of the Armenian American community, particularly of Massachusetts. On April 11, for example, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved Resolution 410, which you co-sponsored. It calls upon Turkey to acknowledge the Armenian genocide of 1915.



You are also a lawyer and a long-serving public servant who is scheduled to speak and receive a public service award at the Suffolk Law School commencement in Boston on May 17, 2014.

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You are also a lawyer and a long-serving public servant who is scheduled to speak and receive a public service award at the Suffolk Law School commencement in Boston on May 17, 2014.

You deserve this honor and much more, and we are sure that you have important things to tell the graduating students about the law, including international law.

We ask that you tell Suffolk University President James McCarthy that you will not attend its law school's commencement unless he first withdraws the invitation to Anti-Defamation League National Director Abraham Foxman to speak and receive an honorary law degree.

While you deserve the honor that Suffolk Law intends to bestow on you (including your honorary law degree from Suffolk twelve years ago), Mr. Foxman does not.

Mr. Foxman is the head of an organization that claims to support the civil and human rights of all people, regardless of ethnicity or religion.

Under Mr. Foxman, however, the ADL has not lived up to that ideal in important respects. On the contrary, for decades the ADL has denied the reality of the Armenian genocide.

Moreover, the ADL has long worked directly with the Turkish government, which is a well-known

human rights violator, to defeat resolutions brought before the U.S. Congress that recognize the Armenian Genocide.

Indeed, he and the national ADL oppose the very Armenian genocide resolution that you are co-sponsoring.

Denying the horrific murder of 1.5 million Armenian men, women, and children from 1915-23 as well as the attempt to erase 3000 years of Armenian civilization from Asia Minor clearly parallels denial of the Jewish Holocaust.

No person or organization that truly upholds universal human rights would do such a thing.

Mr. Foxman certainly does not deserve an honorary law degree.

On August 21, 2007, Mr. Foxman perverted international law. On that date, he issued an infamous statement that described the Armenian deaths of 1915 as "consequences" of wartime action.

As you and other lawyers know, under the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention, a perpetrator must have specific "intent" in order for an act to be considered genocide. Mr. Foxman's use of the word "consequences" was clearly meant to ensure that the murders could not be described as "intentional" and would, therefore, be ineligible for prosecution for genocide.

It is contradictory for a law school and lawyers to honor a man who sidesteps international law on a proven genocide, Armenian or otherwise.

The Massachusetts Municipal Association and a dozen Massachusetts cities, including Arlington, Belmont, Medford, Newton, Needham, and Somerville, recognized Mr. Foxman's August 21 statement as an attempt to skirt international law. In 2007 - 2008, they all severed ties with the ADL's so-called "No Place for Hate" program.

During Mr. Foxman's tenure, the ADL has also been widely reported to have engaged in illegal domestic surveillance. In 2007, the police chief of Arlington, Massachusetts stated publicly that he could obtain intelligence information from the ADL that his police department could not otherwise obtain legally on its own. No human rights organization would engage in such activity.

President McCarthy has stated that he is honoring Mr. Foxman for his "body of work." Much of that work, as you can see, is unworthy of being honored by Suffolk Law School. By honoring Mr. Foxman, it is putting the prestige and good name of Suffolk University, as well as the honor of its faculty and students, in jeopardy. The student chapter of the National Lawyers Guild at Suffolk Law agrees, as do a thousand others who have expressed their opposition to the invitation to Mr. Foxman.

We wish to emphasize that it is not a matter of our or your simply disagreeing with Mr. Foxman. Rather, it is his and his ADL's record and their disrespect for international law and settled historical facts.

~~Mr. Foxman does not deserve the honor of sitting on the same stage as you. It is an insult to the U.N. Genocide Convention, and, we believe, to you.~~

Again, we respectfully ask that you not attend the Suffolk Law commencement unless the University first withdraws its invitation to Mr. Foxman.

Sincerely,

Ara A. Jeknavorian, Ph.D.

Co-Chair

