PRESIDENT OBAMA'S STATEMENT ON APRIL 24, 2014

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Category: Opinions

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Today we commemorate the Meds Yeghern and honor those who perished in one of the worst atrocities of the 20th century. We recall the horror of what happened ninety-nine years ago, when 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their deaths in the final days of the Ottoman Empire, and we grieve for the lives lost and the suffering endured by those men, women, and children. We are joined in solemn commemoration by millions in the United States and across the world. In so doing, we remind ourselves of our shared commitment to ensure that such dark chapters of human history are never again repeated.

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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. Peoples and nations grow stronger, and build a foundation for a more just and tolerant future, by acknowledging and reckoning with painful elements of the past. We continue to learn this lesson in the United States, as we strive to reconcile some of the darkest moments in our own history. We recognize and commend the growing number of courageous Armenians and Turks who have already taken this path, and encourage more to do so, with the backing of their governments, and mine. And we recall with pride the humanitarian efforts undertaken by the American Committee for Syrian and Armenian Relief, funded by donations from Americans, which saved the lives of countless Armenians and

others from vulnerable communities displaced in 1915.

As we honor through remembrance those Armenian lives that were unjustly taken in 1915, we are inspired by the extraordinary courage and great resiliency of the Armenian people in the face of such tremendous adversity and suffering. I applaud the countless contributions that Armenian-Americans have made to American society, culture, and communities. We share a common commitment to supporting the Armenian people as they work to build a democratic, peaceful, and prosperous nation.

Today, our thoughts and prayers are with Armenians everywhere, as we recall the horror of the Meds Yeghern, honor the memory of those lost, and reaffirm our enduring commitment to the people of Armenia and to the principle that such atrocities must always be remembered if we are to prevent them from occurring ever again.

Senator Barack Obama (2008), "The facts are undeniable."

CNN (2014), "... apparently that is quite deniable."

The descriptive "Medz Yeghern", used by President Barack Obama this year and in the recent past to describe the Genocide of Armenians is archaic, at least 60 years out of date. For several decades following the Genocide, Armenians used the words "Medz Yeghern" (Great Slaughter, Carnage, Massacre) to express what Turkey had done to Armenians during 1915-1923, distinguishing it from previous calamities of smaller proportions, such as the massacre of Adana (1909) which resulted in the deaths of as many as 20,000–30,000 Armenians. Today the Armenians use the term *Tseghasbanutyun*, translation of the word **genocide,** coined by Polish-Jewish jurist Raphael Lemkin (1944). The concept was based on the crime of the Ottomans' deliberate and organized elimination of its Armenians.