

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

April 24, 2009

Statement of President Barack Obama on Armenian Remembrance Day

Ninety four years ago, one of the great atrocities of the 20th century began. Each year, we pause to remember the 1.5 million Armenians who were subsequently massacred or marched to their death in the final days of the Ottoman Empire. The *Meds Yeghern* must live on in our memories, just as it lives on in the hearts of the Armenian people.

History, unresolved, can be a heavy weight. Just as the terrible events of 1915 remind us of the dark prospect of man's inhumanity to man, reckoning with the past holds out the powerful promise of reconciliation. I have consistently stated my own view of what occurred in 1915, and my view of that history has not changed. My interest remains the achievement of a full, frank and just acknowledgment of the facts.

The best way to advance that goal right now is for the Armenian and Turkish people to address the facts of the past as a part of their efforts to move forward. I strongly support efforts by the Turkish and Armenian people to work through this painful history in a way that is honest, open, and constructive. To that end, there has been courageous and important dialogue among Armenians and Turks, and within Turkey itself. I also strongly support the efforts by Turkey and Armenia to normalize their bilateral relations. Under Swiss auspices, the two governments have agreed on a framework and roadmap for normalization. I commend this progress, and urge them to fulfill its promise.

Together, Armenia and Turkey can forge a relationship that is peaceful, productive and prosperous. And together, the Armenian and Turkish people will be stronger as they acknowledge their common history and recognize their common humanity.

Nothing can bring back those who were lost in the *Meds Yeghern*. But the contributions that Armenians have made over the last ninety-four years stand as a testament to the talent, dynamism and resilience of the Armenian people, and as the ultimate rebuke to those who tried to destroy them. The United States of America is a far richer country because of the many Americans of Armenian descent who have contributed to our society, many of whom immigrated to this country in the aftermath of 1915. Today, I stand with them and with Armenians everywhere with a sense of friendship, solidarity, and deep respect.