

## BERMAN LETTER CONDEMNING ARMENIAN GENOCIDE DENIAL

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Thursday, April 15, 2010

Washington, DC - Howard L. Berman (D-CA), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, this week sent a strongly-worded letter to his House colleagues rejecting what he called a „morally-blind“ argument denying the indisputable historical evidence of the Armenian Genocide.

Here is the text of the letter:

Dear Colleague,

As you may be aware, members of the Turkey caucus are circulating a sign-on letter to Speaker Pelosi urging that the Armenian Genocide Resolution (H. Res. 252), recently passed by the Foreign Affairs Committee, not be brought to the full House for a vote. The authors argue that passage of the bill by the House would do „irrevocable harm“ to U.S. national security, „derail ongoing efforts“ by Armenia and Turkey to normalize relations, and harm the U.S. economy by putting American exports to and investment in Turkey at risk.

I disagree with many points in the letter, but I take particularly strong exception to the use of the phrase „so-called ‘Armenian Genocide Resolution’“, which casts doubt on the historicity of the Armenian Genocide. In doing so, it flies in the face of the overwhelming weight of unimpeachable historical evidence and the virtually unanimous opinion of genocide scholars. In fact, the man who coined the term „genocide,“ Rafael Lemkin, considered the World War I-era massacres of the Armenians to constitute genocide, and he cited that genocide as the event that triggered his interest in genocide.

I also reject the various national-security arguments cited by opponents of the Armenian Genocide resolution. I believe that US-Turkish security relations are founded on mutual interests and that Turkey is not about to discard the immense benefits it derives from bilateral security relations for the sake of „punishing“ the US for a non-binding resolution, however much it may resent that resolution.

For example, would Turkey risk losing real-time intelligence on PKK movements in northern Iraq? Highly doubtful. Moreover, the history of Turkish responses to acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide by other governments and parliaments suggests that negative fall-out would be limited and short-lived, at most.

In addition, I dispute the argument that passing H. Res. 252 would derail the Turkish-Armenian protocols. The protocols have been gathering dust in the Turkish parliament since they were signed in October, and particularly in light of the preconditions established by the Turkish leadership, there is little likelihood that they will be ratified any time soon.

Finally, I take issue with the assertion that passing the resolution would harm the U.S. economy. It strains credulity to believe that Turkey would reject U.S. investment and stop buying all U.S. products in the event that the House adopted H. Res. 252. In a more general sense, I am deeply disturbed by this morally-blind line of argument, as it could be used to justify inaction on any number of human rights issues around the world.

Although I don't accept the arguments of those who anticipate potential harm to U.S. national security should the House pass the Armenian Genocide Resolution, I respect those arguments. What I can neither accept nor respect is any claim, direct or implied, that one of the greatest crimes of modern history did not happen.

Sincerely,

Howard L. Berman Chairman Committee on Foreign Affairs