



## TURKISH AMERICAN NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

March 14, 2017

**Honorable Joe Straus**  
**Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives**

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**No to HR 191**  
**No to Religious and Ethnic Divisiveness in Texas**

Dear Mr. Speaker:

On behalf of one million Turkish and Turkic Americans nationwide, including approximately 50,000 in the State of Texas, the Turkish American National Steering Committee (TASC) **urges you not to support HR 191**, which prejudicially incriminates people of Turkish heritage and the Republic of Turkey of the crime of genocide against the Armenians in 1915.

Civil War within a World War: The Ottoman-Armenian of 1885-1919 was a civil war within a world war. More than a million Ottoman Muslims and Jews on one side and a half million Armenians on the other side of this conflict perished, as Russia used the Armenians as proxies to weaken the Ottoman Empire in the east while the British invaded at Gallipoli in the west. While we Turks are proud to have defeated the British and Russians in these simultaneous wars, we are very sad because the majority of the casualties were civilians who died due to the privations of war. Over 40 million civilians perished in Europe, the Causes, and the Middle East in WWI.

Near East Relief Fund, Red Cross and Clara Barton: HR 191 strategically ignores the Near East Relief Fund, which was implemented jointly by the United States and the Ottoman Empire to help victims, both Christians and Muslims, during the conflict in the Ottoman East during WWI. The fact that the Ottoman Empire welcomed and assisted this humanitarian aid effort refutes the genocide allegation. Furthermore, Clara Barton, who cared for both sides in the American Civil War and founded the American Red Cross, was hosted by the Ottoman Government to form the Red Crescent and to facilitate humanitarian aid to both sides of the Ottoman-Armenian conflict.

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Clara Barton's historic home in Washington DC proudly displays two flags, American and Ottoman Turkish.

Longstanding U.S. Foreign Policy: HR 191 contravenes U.S. federal policy of disfavoring legislative enactments that make this incrimination. Indeed, the U.S. Supreme Court let stand an 11-0 Ninth Circuit *en banc* decision invalidating a California law that utilized this controversial term.<sup>1</sup> All U.S. Presidents to date have stood by this policy, and we can expect President Donald Trump to do the same.

Legal Foundations: HR 191 ignores the facts and the law. Genocide is defined by the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, to which the United States is a party, and which binds the 50 states. In 1985, the UN Sub-Commission on Human Rights considered and decided not to accept a report that referred to the Armenian case as genocide. In 2000, 2007, and 2015 the U.N declared that it did not accept the Armenian case as genocide.<sup>2</sup> More recently, the European Court of Human Rights High Commission held in *Perincek v. Switzerland* that disagreeing with the Armenian claim of genocide did not constitute genocide denial, because the Armenian case was not a proven case of genocide.<sup>3</sup>

Foreign Intervention: Finally, please cast a careful eye at the Armenian advocates who may be lobbying for HR 191. According to the Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), a usual promoter of anti-Turkish initiatives, is not only the U.S. representative of a foreign political party, the nationalist Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), it refuses to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA).<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps more chilling, ANCA's former chairman, Mourad Topalian, was convicted of weapons and explosives charges which the FBI connected to at least four terrorist attacks, while ARF's militant wing, the Justice Commandos (JCAG), was complicit in more than 20 terror attacks on American soil, including four assassinations.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://cdn.ca9.uscourts.gov/datastore/opinions/2012/02/23/07-56722.pdf>, and <http://www.ataa.org/press/US-Supreme-Court-Lets-Stand-Decision-Respecting-US-Federal-Policy.html>

<sup>2</sup> Addendums 1 & 2, U.N. Position on Armenian Cass, (October 10, 2000), (April 2, 2007), (April 13, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> ECHR Application No. 27510/08

<sup>4</sup> CREW's investigation is summarized at: <http://www.citizensforethics.org/index.php/press/entry/complaint-against-armenian-national-committee-of-america-western-region/>

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For the foregoing reasons, we respectfully request that you not support HR 191 and that you take a firm stand against historical revisionism, prejudicial incriminations, and divisiveness in the State of Texas. Unite us. Don't divide us. Thank you for your consideration.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**The Turkish American National Steering Committee**

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