



Kriss Worthington

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CONSENT CALENDAR

January 29, 2008

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Kriss Worthington

Subject: Reaffirmation - U.S. Record of the Armenian Genocide

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a Resolution calling upon the House of Representatives to schedule a vote on House Resolution 106, which reaffirms the U.S. record of the Armenian Genocide.

BACKGROUND:

The following information is from the resolution adopted by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors on October 30, 2007:

In 1915 the Ottoman Turkish government started its genocide against Armenians. By 1923, 1.5 million Armenians, a majority of Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire had been killed as a result of this genocide and the survivors were permanently displaced from their homeland.

To this day, the Turkish government has not recognized the genocide. To further promote their denial of the genocide, the Turkish government recently enacted Article 301 of the Turkish Criminal Code, which suppresses free speech and prohibits discussion of the Armenian Genocide.

This law has led to the prosecution of many Turkish citizens including Nobel Laureate Orhan Pamuk and has contributed to an atmosphere which led to the assassination of Hrant Dink.

The government of the United States has been on record as recognizing the Armenian Genocide. However, recently the Turkish government has been aggressively lobbying our government to change its position. Unfortunately, they have been making progress in getting our government to change its historical recognition of the genocide. For example, they recently pressured the Bush administration to dismiss our Ambassador to Armenia, John Evans. Our government complied with their request and replaced the Ambassador. The Bush administration, as opposed to other administrations, has been more responsive to Turkey because of its strategic position in the Middle East.

It is critical that the Congress reaffirm its recognition of the Armenian Genocide and stop efforts by the Turkish government to wipe out any knowledge of one of the greatest atrocities in history.

The House of Representatives is currently considering House Resolution (HR) 106, which recently passed out of the House Foreign Relations Committee. However, a vote on the resolution has been stalled.

It is important that the City of Berkeley join organizations and cities in urging the House to schedule a vote on HR 106 and ensure that the United States continues on record as recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

NONE

CONTACT PERSON:

Councilmember Kriss Worthington, 981-7170.

Attachments:

1. Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

CALLING UPON THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO SCHEDULE A VOTE ON
HOUSE RESOLUTION 106, WHICH REAFFIRMS THE U.S. RECORD OF THE
ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

WHEREAS, in 1915 the Ottoman Turkish government began its genocide against Armenians; and

WHEREAS, by 1923, 1.5 million Armenians, a majority of Armenians who were living in the Ottoman Empire, had been killed as a result of this genocide, and the survivors were permanently displaced from their homeland, having had most of their personal and communal properties stolen by the government and individuals complicit in the genocide; and

WHEREAS, to this day, these historical facts have been denied by successive Turkish governments, thereby continuing its hostility and posing an existential threat towards Armenia; and

WHEREAS, the denial of this genocide set a precedent and contributed to the perpetration of later genocides throughout the 20th Century, including the Holocaust, during which Adolf Hitler was quoted before the Nazi invasion of Poland as having asked "Who today remembers the annihilation of the Armenians?"; and

WHEREAS, the Turkish government continues to deny the Armenian Genocide, and recently enacted Article 301 of the Turkish Criminal Code, which suppresses free speech and prohibits any discussion of the Armenian Genocide; and

WHEREAS, the official Turkish policy as embodied by Article 301 led to the prosecution of Nobel Laureate Orhan Pamuk; and

WHEREAS, the atmosphere of denial fostered by the government also led to the assassination of Hrant Dink, and the Turkish government has continued to persecute citizens for expressing themselves by prosecuting others, including Hrant Dink's successors at Agos newspaper under the draconian Article 301; and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley has in the past adopted resolutions declaring April 24 as Armenian Genocide Commemoration Day; and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley maintains that the proper recognition of the crime of genocide and other crimes against humanity should never be sacrificed for perceived political benefits; and

WHEREAS, by joining our voices against the deniers of the Armenian Genocide, we are able to guard against the occurrence of such genocide in the future; and

WHEREAS, House Resolution 106 has overwhelming support in the United States House of Representatives, as demonstrated by more than 200 co-sponsors, and was recently adopted by the House Foreign Affairs Committee; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the City of Berkeley that it calls upon the House of Representatives to continue to support United States recognition of the Armenian Genocide and schedule a vote on House Resolution 106.

