

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

ON 81ST ANNIVERSARY, DOLE PAYS TRIBUTE TO VICTIMS;
UNITED STATES MUST SEND UNIFIED MESSAGE THAT MURDER OF 1.5
MILLION ARMENIANS WAS GENOCIDE

Today marks the 81st anniversary of the Armenian genocide. As Armenians gather worldwide today to commemorate the anniversary, I rise to pay tribute to the victims of this tragedy. Although some still refuse to recognize historical fact, there should be no doubt that the Armenian people suffered the first genocide of the modern age.

As many of my colleagues know, between the years 1915-1923, 1.5 Million Armenians were subjected to systematic extermination through a policy of deportation, torture, starvation and massacre. At the time, the world recognized that the Ottoman Empire had committed a crime against humanity, though the term "genocide" would not be coined until years later. The United States condemned the brutal treatment of the Armenians. The United States rendered humanitarian assistance to many of the survivors in the largest relief effort ever organized by this country. Yet even with all the facts that we have before us, most of which have been compiled by U.S. sources, some still refuse to acknowledge that there was a genocide.

Most of us are willing to look history in the eye and see the danger of closing our eyes and hearts to the truth of the tragedy which took place. We will not cease in our efforts to remember what happened. This year, along with 25 of my colleagues, I signed a bi-partisan letter urging the President to use the word "genocide" in his statement commemorating the anniversary. While nearly every other nation recognizes the genocide, one nation still insists that the genocide never happened -- the government of Turkey. As I have stated in the past, no responsibility for the history of the genocide rests with either the Turkish people or their modern-day government. The Ottoman Empire, which committed the genocide against the Armenians, has not existed since October 29, 1923. As Operation Desert Storm again demonstrated, Turkey is an important friend and partner to the United States, and we highly value our friendship with the Turkish government and people. That friendship would not suffer from, and in fact, would be strengthened, by recognizing the fact of the Armenian genocide.

At a time when the world is beset by problems, including acts of genocide, the United States cannot fail to send a unified message. Only by issuing a clear statement on genocide can the United States convey to the world our nation's resolve and determination to prevent such crimes from recurring. We cannot allow history to dictate the future, but neither can we forget history nor turn our backs on the truth. On this 81st anniversary of the Armenian genocide, let all of us as Americans, even as we remember the tragic events of the past, rededicate ourselves to making sure it never happens again. Finally, I would add that President Clinton has just issued his statement commemorating the anniversary of the genocide. It is unfortunate that unlike his statement in 1992, this year's statement does not use the historically correct word of "genocide" to describe what happened to the Armenian people from 1915 to 1923.

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