

SENATOR PAUL E. TSONGAS

FLOOR STATEMENT

APRIL 21, 1983

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE DAY

Mr. President, April 24, 1984 will mark the sixty-eighth anniversary of one of the most dreadful episodes in history: the massacre of more than one million Armenians in Turkey between 1915 and 1923. On April 24 every year, Armenians throughout the world recall and mourn this genocide against their ancestors. Because I believe there is value in reminding Americans of this period of atrocities, I today am introducing a resolution calling on the President to designate April 24, 1984, a day of remembrance for all victims of genocide, especially those of Armenian ancestry.

The Armenian genocide has become known as the First Genocide of the Twentieth Century. The arrests, deportations, torture and murder of that era must never be forgotten. It is imperative that we who value human life and dignity acknowledge such tragedies and strive to prevent them from happening again.

*Am. Amer's still alive who remember it -*

Basic to the United States heritage is a commitment to human rights.

Our citizens have a long tradition of speaking out on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves. And nothing is more fundamental to the American spirit than a willingness to provide refuge to those who have been persecuted and oppressed elsewhere in the world.

It is therefore only natural that this country should have become home to a large Armenian community and that we should sympathize with the plight of Armenians around the world. In Cyprus today, for example, Armenians have demonstrated an indomitable spirit in the face of a restrictive Turkish policy, and they deserve our continuing support.

The history of the Armenian people has been one of survival against overwhelming odds. Despite the horrors of the genocide of Armenians during the Ottoman Turkish Empire in the early part of this century, the Armenian people have remained faithful to their culture, values and desire for freedom.

The genocide perpetrated against them must never be forgotten. By remembering such atrocities, people who have suffered under cruel and heinous regimes can maintain a sense of ethnic identity and alert future generations about evil in the past so as to avoid it in the future.

We are fortunate in the United States to have the benefit of ethnic diversity. In particular, in my home state of Massachusetts, we have benefitted immensely from ethnic diversity. Our large Armenian community has greatly enhanced the quality of life in the Commonwealth by sharing its rich heritage and culture.

The Armenian people have been exemplary citizens of our nation. They are leaders in the professions, in the arts and sciences, in the business community and in all levels of government.



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As the Armenian community has overcome its great suffering and has flourished, so must other peoples take heart from their example and flourish despite repression against them and violations of basic human rights. We in the United States must united behind human rights for all peoples who have suffered and continue to suffer.

For these reasons, Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to adopt the resolution I am introducing today to make April 24, 1984, a day of remembrance for victims of genocide.