

Assembly Joint Resolution

No. 27

Introduced by Assembly Member Nazarian

February 18, 2022

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 27—Relative to the Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek Genocide.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

AJR 27, as introduced, Nazarian. Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek Genocide.

This measure would, among other things, recognize April 24, 2022, as “State of California Day of Commemoration of the 107th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923,” and would call upon the President of the United States and the United States Congress to formally and consistently reaffirm the historical truth that the atrocities committed against the Armenian people constituted genocide.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, Armenians have resided in Asia Minor and the
2 Caucasus for approximately four millennia, and have a long and
3 rich history in the region, including the establishment of many
4 kingdoms, and despite Armenians’ historic presence, stewardship,
5 and autonomy in the region, Turkish rulers of the Ottoman Empire
6 and the Republic of Turkey subjected Armenians to severe and
7 unjust persecution and brutality, including wholesale massacres
8 beginning in the 1890s; and
9 WHEREAS, The Armenian nation was subjected to a systematic
10 and premeditated genocide officially beginning on April 24, 1915,
11 at the hands of the Young Turk Government of the Ottoman Empire

1 from 1915 to 1919, inclusive, and continued at the hands of the
2 Kemalist Movement of Turkey from 1920 to 1923, inclusive,
3 whereby over 1.5 million Armenian men, women, and children
4 were slaughtered or marched to their deaths in an effort to
5 annihilate the Armenian nation in the first genocide of modern
6 times, while thousands of surviving Armenian women and children
7 were forcibly converted and Islamized, and hundreds of thousands
8 more were subjected to ethnic cleansing during the period of the
9 modern Republic of Turkey from 1924 to 1937, inclusive; and

10 WHEREAS, During the genocides of the Christians living in
11 the Ottoman Empire and surrounding regions, which occurred
12 during the first half of the 20th century, 1.5 million men, women,
13 and children of Armenian descent, and hundreds of thousands of
14 Assyrians, Greeks, and other Christians, lost their lives at the hands
15 of the Ottoman Turkish Empire and the Republic of Turkey,
16 constituting one of the most atrocious violations of human rights
17 in the history of the world; and

18 WHEREAS, These crimes against humanity also had the
19 consequence of permanently removing all traces of the Armenians
20 and other targeted people from their historic homelands of more
21 than four millennia and enriching the perpetrators with the lands
22 and other property of the victims of these crimes, including the
23 usurpation of several thousand churches; and

24 WHEREAS, In response to the genocide and at the behest of
25 President Woodrow Wilson and the United States Department of
26 State, the Near East Relief organization was founded and became
27 the first congressionally sanctioned American philanthropic effort
28 created exclusively to provide humanitarian assistance and rescue
29 to the Armenian nation and other Christian minorities from
30 annihilation, who went on to survive and thrive outside of their
31 ancestral homeland all over the world and specifically in this state;
32 and

33 WHEREAS, Near East Relief succeeded, with the active
34 participation of the citizens from this state, in delivering \$117
35 million in assistance, and saving more than one million refugees,
36 including 132,000 orphans, between 1915 and 1930, by delivering
37 food, clothing, and materials for shelter, setting up refugee camps,
38 clinics, hospitals, and orphanages; and

39 WHEREAS, The Armenian nation survived the genocide despite
40 the attempt by the Ottoman Empire to exterminate it; and

1 WHEREAS, Adolf Hitler, in persuading his army commanders
2 that the merciless persecution and killing of Jews, Poles, and other
3 people would bring no retribution, declared, “Who, after all, speaks
4 today of the annihilation of the Armenians?”; and

5 WHEREAS, On November 4, 1918, immediately after the
6 collapse of the Young Turk regime and before the founding of the
7 Republic of Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1923, the
8 Ottoman Parliament considered a motion on the crimes committed
9 by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) stating: “A
10 population of one million people guilty of nothing except belonging
11 to the Armenian nation were massacred and exterminated,
12 including even women and children.” The Minister of Interior at
13 the time, Fethi Bey, responded by telling the Parliament: “It is the
14 intention of the government to cure every single injustice done up
15 until now, as far as the means allow, to make possible the return
16 to their homes of those sent into exile, and to compensate for their
17 material loss as far as possible”; and

18 WHEREAS, On August 1, 1926, in an interview published in
19 the Los Angeles Examiner, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk admitted:
20 “These left-overs from the former Young Turk Party, who should
21 have been made to account for the lives of millions of our Christian
22 subjects who were ruthlessly driven en masse, from their homes
23 and massacred, have been restive under the Republican rule. They
24 have hitherto lived on plunder, robbery and bribery and become
25 inimical to any idea or suggestion to enlist in useful labor and earn
26 their living by the honest sweat of their brow”; and

27 WHEREAS, The Parliamentary Investigative Committee
28 proceeded to collect relevant documents describing the actions of
29 those responsible for the Armenian mass killings and turned them
30 over to the Turkish Military Tribunal. CUP’s leading figures were
31 found guilty of massacring Armenians and hanged or given lengthy
32 prison sentences. The Turkish Military Tribunal requested that
33 Germany extradite to Turkey the masterminds of the massacres
34 who had fled the country. After German refusal, they were tried
35 in absentia and sentenced to death; and

36 WHEREAS, Unlike other people and governments that have
37 admitted and denounced the abuses and crimes of predecessor
38 regimes, and despite the Turkish government’s earlier admissions
39 and the overwhelming proof of genocidal intent, the Republic of
40 Turkey inexplicably and adamantly has denied the occurrence of

1 the crimes against humanity committed by the Ottoman and Young
2 Turk rulers for many years, and continues to do so a full century
3 since the first crimes constituting genocide occurred; and

4 WHEREAS, Those denials compound the grief of the few
5 remaining survivors and deprive the surviving Armenian nation
6 of its individual and collective ancestral lands, property, cultural
7 heritage, financial assets, and population growth; and

8 WHEREAS, The Republic of Turkey has escalated its
9 international campaign of Armenian Genocide denial, maintained
10 its blockade of Armenia, and increased its pressure on the small
11 but growing movement in Turkey acknowledging the Armenian
12 Genocide and seeking justice for this systematic campaign of
13 destruction of millions of Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, and other
14 Christians upon their biblical-era homelands; and

15 WHEREAS, Those citizens of Turkey, both Armenian and
16 non-Armenian, who continue to speak the truth about the Armenian
17 Genocide, such as human rights activist and journalist Hrant Dink,
18 continue to be silenced by violent means; and

19 WHEREAS, There is continued concern about the welfare of
20 Christians in the Republic of Turkey, their right to worship and
21 practice freely, and the legal status and condition of thousands of
22 ancient Armenian churches, monasteries, cemeteries, and other
23 historical and cultural structures, sites, and antiquities in the
24 Republic of Turkey; and

25 WHEREAS, The United States is on record as having officially
26 recognized the Armenian Genocide in the United States
27 government's May 28, 1951, written statement to the International
28 Court of Justice regarding the Reservations to the Convention on
29 the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, through
30 President Ronald Reagan's April 22, 1981, Proclamation No. 4838,
31 and by congressional legislation including House Joint Resolution
32 148 adopted on April 9, 1975, and House Joint Resolution 247
33 adopted on September 12, 1984; and

34 WHEREAS, Prior to the Convention on the Prevention and
35 Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the United States had a
36 record of seeking just and constructive means to address the
37 consequences of the Ottoman Empire's intentional destruction of
38 the Armenian people, including through United States Senate
39 Concurrent Resolution 12 adopted on February 9, 1916, United
40 States Senate Resolution 359 adopted on May 11, 1920, and

1 President Woodrow Wilson’s November 22, 1920, decision titled,
2 “The Frontier between Armenia and Turkey,” which was issued
3 as a binding arbitral award, yet has not been enforced to this date
4 despite its legally binding status; and

5 WHEREAS, President Barack Obama entered office “calling
6 for Turkey’s acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide” and on
7 April 24, 2013, and similarly on April 24, 2014, he further stated,
8 “A full, frank, and just acknowledgment of the facts is in all of
9 our interests. Peoples and nations grow stronger, and build a more
10 just and tolerant future, by acknowledging and reckoning with
11 painful elements of the past”; and

12 WHEREAS, California is home to the largest Armenian
13 American population in the United States, and Armenians living
14 in California have enriched our state through their leadership and
15 contribution in business, agriculture, academia, government, and
16 the arts, many of whom have family members who experienced
17 firsthand the horror and evil of the Armenian Genocide and its
18 ongoing denial; and

19 WHEREAS, Every person should be made aware and educated
20 about the Armenian Genocide and other crimes against humanity;
21 and

22 WHEREAS, The State of California has been at the forefront
23 of encouraging and promoting a curriculum relating to human
24 rights and genocide in order to empower future generations to
25 prevent the recurrence of genocide; and

26 WHEREAS, April 24, 1915, is globally observed and recognized
27 as the commencement of the Armenian Genocide; and

28 WHEREAS, Armenians in California and throughout the world
29 have not been provided with justice for the crimes perpetrated
30 against the Armenian nation despite the fact that over a century
31 has passed since the crimes were first committed; now, therefore,
32 be it

33 *Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of*
34 *California, jointly*, That April 24, 2022, be recognized as “State
35 of California Day of Commemoration of the 107th Anniversary
36 of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923”; and be it further

37 *Resolved*, That the Legislature commends its conscientious
38 educators who teach about human rights and genocide and intends
39 for them, through this resolution, to continue to enhance their

1 efforts to educate students at all levels about the experience of the
2 Armenians and other crimes against humanity; and be it further
3 *Resolved*, That the Legislature hereby commends the
4 extraordinary service that was delivered by Near East Relief to the
5 survivors of the Armenian Genocide and the Assyrian Genocide,
6 including thousands of direct beneficiaries of American
7 philanthropy who are the parents, grandparents, and
8 great-grandparents of many Californian Armenians and Assyrians,
9 and pledges its intent, through this resolution, to working with
10 community groups, nonprofit organizations, citizens, state
11 personnel, and the community at large to host statewide educational
12 and cultural events; and be it further

13 *Resolved*, That the Legislature deplores the persistent, ongoing
14 efforts by any person, in this country or abroad, to deny the
15 historical fact of the Armenian Genocide; and be it further

16 *Resolved*, That the Legislature respectfully calls upon the
17 President of the United States and the United States Congress to
18 formally and consistently reaffirm the historical truth that the
19 atrocities committed against the Armenian people constituted
20 genocide; and be it further

21 *Resolved*, That the Legislature calls upon the President of the
22 United States to work toward equitable, constructive, stable, and
23 durable Armenian-Turkish relations; and be it further

24 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
25 of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United
26 States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and to each
27 Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the
28 United States.