



TOWN OF FAIRFAX STAFF REPORT April 1, 2015

TO: Mayor and Town Council

FROM: Michele Gardner, Town Clerk *MG*

SUBJECT: Adopt a resolution designating the 24th of April 2015 as a Day of Commemoration of the Centennial Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt the attached resolution designating the 24th of April 2015 as a Day of Commemoration of the Centennial Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

DISCUSSION

Mayor Coler requested that this item be added to the agenda for the Council's consideration.

ATTACHMENTS

Proposed resolution

RESOLUTION 15-__

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFAX DESIGNATING THE 24TH OF APRIL 2015 AS A DAY OF COMMEMORATION OF THE CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

WHEREAS, Armenians have resided in Asia Minor and the Caucasus for approximately four millennia, and have a long and rich history in the region, including the establishment of many kingdoms, and despite Armenians' historic presence, stewardship, and autonomy in the region, Turkish rulers of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey subjected Armenians to severe and unjust persecution and brutality, including wholesale massacres beginning in the 1890s; and

WHEREAS, the Armenian Nation was subjected to a systematic and premeditated Genocide, officially beginning on April 24, 1915, at the hands of the Young Turk Government of the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1919 and continued at the hands of the Kemalist Movement of Turkey from 1920 to 1923 whereby over 1.5 million Armenian men, women, and children were slaughtered or marched to their deaths in an effort to annihilate the Armenian Nation in the First Genocide of modern times, while thousands of surviving Armenian women and children were forcibly converted and Islamized, and hundreds of thousands more were subjected to ethnic cleansing during the period of the modern Republic of Turkey from 1924 to 1937; and

WHEREAS, during the genocides of the Christians living in the Ottoman Empire and surrounding regions which occurred during the first half of the Twentieth Century, in addition to the 1.5 million men, women, and children of Armenian descent, hundreds of thousands of Assyrians, Greeks and other Christians, lost their lives at the hands of the Ottoman Turkish Empire and the Republic of Turkey, constituting one of the most atrocious violations of human rights in the history of the world; and

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

WHEREAS, in response to the Genocide and at the behest of the President Woodrow Wilson and the U.S. State Department, the Near East Relief organization was founded, and became the first Congressionally sanctioned American philanthropic effort created exclusively to provide humanitarian assistance and rescue the Armenian Nation and other Christian minorities from annihilation, who went on to survive and thrive outside of their ancestral homeland all over the world and specifically in the State of California; and

WHEREAS, Near East Relief succeeded, with the active participation of the citizens from the State of California, in delivering \$117 million of assistance, and saving more than one million

refugees, including 132,000 orphans, between 1915 and 1930, by delivering food, clothing, and materials for shelter, setting up refugee camps, clinics, hospitals, and orphanages; and **WHEREAS**, the Armenian Nation survived the Genocide despite the attempt by Ottoman Turkey and the modern Republic of Turkey to exterminate it; and

WHEREAS, Adolph Hitler, in persuading his army commanders that the merciless persecution and killing of Jews, Poles, and other people would bring no retribution, declared, "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"; and

WHEREAS, the planning and implementation of Genocide is indisputably recognized in international law as a Crime Against Humanity and is punishable as such, yet has remained unpunished for nearly one hundred years, as the Government of Turkey is allowed with impunity to distort history and to deny the Genocide and its consequences perpetrated both by its Ottoman predecessor and its own predecessor regimes despite international recognition of the Armenian Genocide by 23 countries, including the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, unlike other people and governments that have admitted and denounced the abuses and crimes of predecessor regimes, and despite the Turkish governments' earlier admissions and the overwhelming proof of genocidal intent, the Republic of Turkey inexplicably and adamantly has denied the occurrence of the crimes against humanity committed by the Ottoman and Young Turk rulers for many years, and continues to do so a full century since the first crimes constituting genocide occurred; and

WHEREAS, those denials compound the grief of the few remaining survivors of the atrocities, desecrate the memory of the victims, cause continuing pain to the descendants of the victims, and deprive the surviving Armenian Nation, both on individual and collective levels, of their ancestral land, property, culture, heritage, financial assets, and population growth; and

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

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

WHEREAS, this measure would declare that the Town of Fairfax deplores the persistent, ongoing efforts by any person, in this country or abroad, to deny the historical fact of the Armenian Genocide; and

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

WHEREAS, the United States is on record as having officially recognized the Armenian Genocide in the United States government's May 28, 1951, written statement to the International Court of Justice regarding the Reservations to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, through President Ronald Reagan's April 22, 1981, Proclamation No. 4838, and by Congressional legislation including House Joint Resolution 148 adopted on April 8, 1975, and House Joint Resolution 247 adopted on September 10, 1984; and

WHEREAS, prior to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the United States has a record of having sought to justly and constructively address the consequences of the Ottoman Empire's intentional destruction of the Armenian people, including through Senate Concurrent Resolution 12 adopted on February 9, 1916, Senate Resolution 359 adopted on May 11, 1920, and President Woodrow Wilson's November 22, 1920, decision entitled, "The Frontier between Armenia and Turkey", which was issued as a Binding Arbitral Award, yet has not been enforced to this date despite its legally binding status; and

WHEREAS, President Barack Obama entered office "calling for Turkey's acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide" and on April 24, 2013 and April 24, 2014 he further stated, "A full, frank, and just acknowledgment of the facts is in all of our interests. Nations grow stronger by acknowledging and reckoning with painful elements of the past, thereby building a foundation for a more just and tolerant future"; and

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

WHEREAS, April 24, 1915 is globally observed and recognized as the commencement of the Armenian Genocide and April 24, 2015 will mark its centennial anniversary; and

WHEREAS, Armenians in the Town of Fairfax, California, and throughout the world, have not been provided with justice for the crimes perpetrated against the Armenian nation despite the fact that a century has passed since the crimes were first committed; and

WHEREAS, the Armenian people, in the Town of Fairfax, California, and elsewhere, remain resolved and their spirit continues to thrive a century after their near annihilation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED by the Town Council of the Town of Fairfax as follows:

1. The 24th day of April 2015, is a Day of Commemoration in the Town of Fairfax of the Centennial Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923; and

2. The Town of Fairfax commends the extraordinary service which was delivered by Near East Relief to the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and Assyrian Genocide, including thousands of direct beneficiaries of American philanthropy who are the parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents of many Californian Armenian Americans and Assyrian Americans, and reaffirms its commitment to working with community groups, nonprofit organizations, and personnel, to host educational events dedicated specifically to these efforts and this important part of American history; and
3. The Town Council calls on the President to work toward equitable, constructive, stable, and durable Armenian-Turkish relations based upon the Republic of Turkey's full acknowledgment of the facts and ongoing consequences of the Armenian Genocide, and a fair, just, and comprehensive international resolution of this crime against humanity, including reparations to the Armenian nation.

The foregoing Resolution was duly passed and adopted at a regular meeting of the Town Council of the Town of Fairfax held in said Town on the 1st day of April 2015 by the following vote, to wit:

AYES:
NOES:
ABSENT:

Barbara Coler, Mayor

Attest:

Michele Gardner, Town Clerk