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To: Foreign Affairs Legislative Aide
From: Kate Nahapetian, Government Affairs Director
Date: December 18, 2007

RE: Turkish troops push into Iraq - attacks displace 1,800

In October, Turkey threatened to attack Iraq, unless the Armenian Genocide resolution was blocked. Despite this human rights resolution not being scheduled for a vote, Turkey is attacking Iraq anyway and risking opening a new front in the war.

On Sunday, Turkey bombed villages in Iraq with as many as 50 fighter jets, claiming civilian lives and forcing 1,800 to flee their homes. On Tuesday, Turkey escalated its attacks with the incursion of 300 Turkish troops.

Being bullied by Turkey to remain silent on a past genocide has emboldened Turkey to escalate its aggression in the region. The developments of the past few days underscore the very fundamental point that **we cannot advance our interests by betraying our values - especially under threat from a foreign government.**

Clearly, the real threat to our regional interests is not a human rights declaration, but rather Turkey's relentless pursuit of its own interests through aggression, at America's expense and with no regard to whether our Congress speaks out or remains silent on the Armenian Genocide.

Please see articles (attached) for more information. As always, on any Armenian American issue, please call us at (202) 775-1918 or email us at anca@anca.org.

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Iraq Kurdish leader snubs Rice over Turkey raid

Reuters - December 18, 2007

ARBIL, Iraq (Reuters) - The president of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region refused to meet U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Tuesday because of Washington's tolerance of Turkish military attacks, his prime minister said.

Rice's unannounced visit to Iraq was overshadowed by an incursion by about 300 Turkish soldiers into the Kurdish province of Dahuk in the north of the country.

The operation was condemned by the Iraqi Kurdish government of President Masoud Barzani, which has also criticized U.S. tolerance of Turkish previous air and artillery strikes targeting separatists based in northern Iraq.

"There was supposed to be a meeting between Rice and Mr. Masoud Barzani in Baghdad, but because of the U.S. position regarding the Turkish attacks and bombings, he preferred not to go," Kurdish Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani told reporters.

"The United States supervises (Iraq's) air space, so it is not possible that a violation of this air space occurs without the knowledge or approval of the Americans," he said. Nechirvan Barzani is Masoud Barzani's nephew.

Turkish warplanes bombed villages in northern Iraq over the weekend. Iraq complained that at least one civilian woman was killed in the strikes, and has said it wants any future military action to be coordinated with Baghdad.

Rice, speaking later at a news conference with Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari, said Turkey, Iraq and the United States had a common interest "in stopping the activities of the PKK".

Turkish Attacks Displace 1,800 People in Northern Iraq

Voice of America - By Lisa Schlein, December 18, 2007

The U.N. refugee agency says it is concerned about the plight of more than 1,800 people who have been displaced by Turkish military strikes against Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq. Lisa Schlein reports for VOA from UNHCR headquarters in Geneva.

The U.N. refugee agency says it is distributing supplies to help more than 1,800 people who fled their homes in the Sangasar sub district of Sulaymania Governorate and from Doli Shahidan in Erbil Governorate.

The Turkish government accuses rebels from the Kurdistan Workers' Party, known as the PKK, of launching attacks on Turkey from bases inside Iraq. Over the weekend, Turkish planes launched attacks against alleged PKK bases in the border area. UNHCR spokeswoman, Astrid van Genderen Stort, says shelling continues.

"We do not know if more people are being displaced. But, at least we are trying to help now the 1,800 people," she said. "The people moved to safer areas in the Governorate. They are now staying with families and friends. But, they are worried to stay much longer. They are afraid they cannot stay too longer. The winter has set in. The conditions are very harsh. The host families do not have a lot to help these people as well. And, the people that are displaced do not have any money to rent homes. So, they are worried. They hope that they will be able to go back soon. But, of course, we do not know. "

UNHCR's Genderen Stort says the displaced people told aid workers 10 villages had been affected by the shelling. She says one woman was reported killed and several people injured.

"The mukhtar (head of a local village) of one of the villages told us that six bridges had been destroyed which connect the villages with each other," she said. "Over 200 head of livestock have also been killed. Some of the families told us that they left behind members of their family in the affected villages as they could not leave the livestock that is still alive untended.

A lack of pasture or space in other villages did not allow them to bring the livestock along and some of the village elders in the other villages did not want this extra livestock."

Genderen Stort says UNHCR and its partners are distributing blankets, mattresses, stoves, jerry cans and soap. She says there is an urgent need for kerosene.