

# CONFIDENTIAL

## Congressional Resolutions on the events of 1915 (Background Brief)

The U.S. House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs Committee is once again considering a resolution, H.Res 252, that attempts to legislate history, namely, what happened during World War I in the Ottoman Empire. Although technically non-binding, passage of this resolution will have concrete, immediate and serious consequences. It will:

### **Permanently derail rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia**

- Witnessed and supported by Secretary of State Clinton, the governments of Turkey and Armenia signed two historic protocols in October 2009 that will reestablish diplomatic relations. The protocols are presently before the parliaments of both countries for ratification. Turkey's commitment to the protocols remains firm.
- The protocols take a sensible approach towards normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia. They also provide for establishing a framework for joint study of the shared history of both countries and to reach a just memory. The ratification process now stands at a sensitive juncture.
- The protocols will also enhance economic opportunities on both sides of the border and enable the essential process of improving Turkish-Armenian relations.
- Unilateral condemnation of Turkey in a Congressional resolution, therefore, will not only undermine this process but also prejudge the outcome of the work undertaken conjointly by Turkey and Armenia. Thus, ratification of the protocols will be permanently derailed.

### **Damage the critical U.S.-Turkey Alliance**

- In April 2009, President Obama chose Turkey for his first official bilateral transatlantic visit. This alone speaks volumes about the importance President Obama places on relations between the United States and Turkey, which he has dubbed a "Model Partnership."
- This "Model Partnership" rests on shared values of democracy, human rights and liberal economy, and it sets a crucial example for many beyond Turkey's region.
- The President recognizes that Turkey and the U.S. have stood shoulder to shoulder in enhancing security and stability in the Middle East and beyond, ensuring energy security, and tackling the threat of terrorism around the globe, as well as resolving protracted international conflicts.
- Turkey has been a critical boots-on-the-ground leader in NATO's mission in Afghanistan and has been an indispensable partner in achieving the U.S. goal of a peaceful transition in Iraq.
- The burgeoning U.S.-Turkish trade relationship – surpassing \$12 billion per year – offers ever-greater benefits to American businesses and workers.
- The U.S.-Turkey relationship will suffer a tremendous blow in the wake of a vote by the Congress mischaracterizing the historical facts of 1915. Popular frustration in Turkey with the U.S. will unquestionably run deep. It will inevitably damage the strong and growing U.S.-Turkey relationship.

### **Endorse an historical perspective that conflicts with solid evidence**

- Any Congressional resolution on this issue will enforce an oversimplified and distorted narrative of complex historical events.
- The story most often told of the tragedy of 1915 portrays Ottoman Turks solely as perpetrators and Armenians solely as victims. Yet the full record reveals human suffering on both Armenian and Turkish subjects of the Ottoman Empire as Armenian nationalists, siding with an invading Russian army, secretly armed and rose in rebellion, indiscriminately massacring the local population in eastern Anatolia.
- "Genocide" is not a convenient catchphrase. It is a crime defined by law with legal consequences.
- To sustain a charge for this crime, indisputable evidence must be tested in, and ruled by, a proper court, not by a legislative body.
- Notwithstanding, the resolutions' main supporters have frequently and openly boasted that passage is but a stepping stone toward territorial claims and outrageous financial penalties against Turkey.

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