

## **Day of Remembrance for the Genocide by the Ottoman State 26.5.21**

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Thank you, Mr President.

I rise today to remember the Armenians, Assyrians and Pontian in Asia Minor who were needlessly killed by the Ottoman Empire.

Following World War I, the then Ottoman Empire committed acts of violence that can only be categorised as genocide on the Asian Minor population.

Although the Turkish government ostensibly denies having committed Genocide, there can be no doubt that between 1915 and 1923 on the grounds of ethnic cleansing killed millions of innocent lives.

Pre-1915, Hellenes, Pontian's, Armenians and Syrians made up 20% of the Asian Minor region populations. Post-1923 they made up just 2% of the population.

The targeted campaign of genocide on these groups was nothing short of inhumane and devastating.

Turkish officials accept that atrocities occurred during this time but argue that there was no systematic attempt to destroy the non-Turkish people of the Asian Minor.

Several senior Ottoman officials were put to trial in Turkey in 1919-1920 in connection with the atrocities. A local governor, Mehmed Kemal was found guilty and hanged for the mass killing of Armenians in the central Anatolian district of Yozgat. The Young Turks' top triumvirate fled abroad. They were sentenced to death in absentia.

Academics and historians have questioned the judicial processes of these trials. The quality of evidence presented and the degree to which the Turkish authorities may have wished to appease the victorious allies.

The United Nations Genocide Convention defines it as a genocide as a series of acts committed "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group." Such acts include killing, causing bodily harm, inflicting conditions calculated to bring about physical destruction, imposing measures intended to prevent births and "forcibly transferring children of the group to another group".

The Turkish Governments actions meet this test.

Although not formally recognised as a genocide, several countries and world leaders recognise this event as one of the most significant tragedies of modern history.

Most recently to do so was the President of the United States, Joe Biden.

America joins Argentina, Brazil, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia and Uruguay and another 9 countries who formally recognise the genocide.

I urge everyone in this chamber to join these nations and support the day of remembrance for those killed for being different.

For their loss and in their and in their memory I move this motion.