

Opening Remarks Tom Samuelian

“Calling things by their Right Names” April 21, 2016

Remarks by Sec’y of State John Kerry, March 17, 2016, Washington

. . . in my judgment, Daesh is responsible for **genocide** against groups in areas under its control, including Yezidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims.

We must **recognize** what Daesh is doing to its victims. We must **hold the perpetrators accountable**. And we must find the resources to help those harmed by these atrocities be able to **survive on their ancestral land**.

**Naming these crimes is important..... the determination to act against genocide, against ethnic cleansing, against the other crimes against humanity must be pronounced among decent people all across the globe.**

Presidential Candidate Kerry, 2004

“As a president, I will fight against denial of Armenian genocide. My administration will recognize April 24, 2005 as the 90th anniversary of the atrocities and I will do everything that the lessons learned from the crime against humanity be used in prevention of other genocides. There cannot be any compromise in the moral issue of putting an end to massacres..... “

President Barack Obama: Campaign Promise 2008

“The **Armenian genocide** is not an allegation, a personal opinion, or a point of view, but rather a **widely documented fact** supported by an overwhelming body of historical evidence. The facts are undeniable. An official policy that calls on diplomats to distort the historical facts is an untenable policy.

“As president I will recognize the Armenian Genocide.”

Gov. Dukakis, 1990 Proclamation

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

WHEREAS: Since 1915, April 24th of every year has been imprinted in the memory of the Armenian people worldwide. It was then that the **mass genocide of the Armenian people began in the Ottoman Turkish Empire, this being the first genocide of the twentieth century**; and

WHEREAS: The Armenian citizens of our Commonwealth are dedicated to honoring the memory of the brave men and women who died in this Holocaust; and

WHEREAS: Armenian families were uprooted from their ancestral homeland, brutally exposed to all kinds of indignities, and hundreds of thousands slain, resulting in more than half of all Armenian people killed; and

WHEREAS: **We consider all atrocities perpetrated by individuals or governments to be repulsive and abhorrent in civilized societies;**

#### 1951 US Submission to the International Court of Justice

*“The practice of genocide has occurred throughout human history. The Roman persecution of the Christians, the **Turkish massacres of Armenians**, the extermination of millions of Jews and Poles by the Nazis are **outstanding examples of the crime of genocide.**”*

President: Harry Truman

Sec’y of State: Dean Acheson

Legal Adviser to the State Department: Adrian Fisher

While parties and witnesses are known to make false statements in their submissions to courts, the United States has never repudiated this position or admitted to making false statements to the International Court of Justice on this occasion. Moreover, unlike other public statements made by political figures, this is an official representation by the United States to the world’s highest international legal body. If not by President Truman himself, then the statement must have been approved and delivered on behalf of the United States by Secretary of State Dean Acheson, or the representative at the UN Warren Austin, and probably drafted by Adrian Fisher – the Legal Adviser to the State Department, the most authoritative voice on international legal matters in the US government. Fisher also served as a prosecutor at the Nazi war crimes tribunal at Nuremberg.

**In short, the US has officially recognized the Armenian Genocide and called it by its right name.** However, it has not acted consistently upon that recognition.

Instead it applies double standards and engages in hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is the coin of the realm of politics and especially international affairs, where sadly lies, blackmail and extortion are the norm rather than the exception.

Nevertheless, lies cost lives. For example, the lie of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. This is a lie manufactured in the corridors of power by greed and petty rivalry among the powers-that-be. First, it is undisputed that the indigenous people of Artsakh are the Armenians, who have lived in that part of the Armenian highlands for thousands of years long before any Turkic tribe made its way west of the Caspian. Second, the Armenian population was repressed and misruled by the Soviets for 70 years. Third, it is not possible to turn the clock back and impose the status quo ante. Azeri fascism, fueled by European and Israeli oil and gas revenues and armed with weapons from Russia, China and Israel, makes it impossible for Armenians and Azeris to live securely side-by-side in the same polity and territory again at least for many generations, if ever. Thus, fourth, the Armenian population of Artsakh has chosen the peaceful path of self-rule as the only practical and effective option for their security and survival. Fifth, the Armenian-Azerbaijan border is the result of British colonialism and Stalinist gerrymandering. It is pathetic and ironic that out of all the principles that the OSCE could choose it continues to repeat these failed Colonialist and Totalitarian policies as part of the peace discourse. Finally, the OSCE and the world community know full well that subjecting the Armenians of Artsakh to fascist Azeri misrule will only lead to genocide, yet mystifyingly, territorial integrity is still part of the discourse, tempting the aggressors to the east and west with the mirage that there are grounds to undo Artsakh's de facto independence by violence and military force. When will the madness end? The only option for peace and stability in the region is de jure recognition of the de facto peace. Only when sanity prevails will things quiet down.

Genocides do not just happen. They are engineered in the corridors of power. Armenian lives matter. Armenians have the right to protect themselves from becoming collateral damage to mindless politics again.

Actually, the madness should have ended long ago. In 1918, after WWI, the indifferent, selfish, distracted powers-that-be made a fatal mistake by failing to deal with Armenian Genocide in a timely manner, and everyone, including themselves, has been paying for it since.

**Is there a way forward? Yes.**

As Pope Francis said a year ago, the Armenian Genocide is an “open wound,” not just for Armenians but for humanity. The Armenian Genocide is already irreversibly recognized by the better part of civilized world. Today, even more than denial, the threat to global security is impunity for genocide. Recognition without reparations poses a catastrophic moral hazard. Impunity for genocide directly feeds the blight of random, ethnicity-based terrorism. If perpetrators can get away with murder, with a slap on the wrist a century later, then the norm is that genocide pays. Denial and “getting away with murder” are particularly corrosive to the tattered fabric of civilization. It took Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, Turkey, Austria, the US, Israel, and others to create the Armenian Genocide predicament. It will take a community effort to fix it. Armenians should do their part to help the community of nations find a solution, but a solution is not solely in Armenian hands.

Impunity for Genocide, like terrorism and global warming, are global issues that should and do concern Armenia like any other responsible member of the community. Armenia will be harmed, sometimes disproportionately, by these global threats. But Armenia did not create them, nor can it fix them alone. Nor is the Armenian Genocide a private, bilateral matter between Armenians and Turks or Armenia and Turkey. Victims and perpetrators cannot agree to make crimes go away.

Even with recognition, genocidal tendencies do not subside quickly or permanently. While they occasion institutional handwringing and lip service, these diseases of the human soul often go latent, as they have in the US and Europe, until they rear their ugly heads periodically stirred by baser human urges like racism and xenophobia. In these circumstances, justice is always partial and often unsatisfactory. Perhaps humanity’s genocidal tendencies cannot be cured; they can only be managed. If so, deterrence, self-reliance and vigilance seem to be the best path forward.

To conclude:

We live in times where our capacity for destruction often exceeds our capacity for understanding, tolerance and restraint. Intervention, when and if it comes, is often too little, too late. Remedy and repair are inadequate and often indefinitely postponed. Under these circumstances, prevention and deterrence appear to be the best cure for the scourge of genocide. Yet we falter even with these.

Deterrence requires universal cognizance that there are some things human beings cannot do to other human beings and get away with it. Impunity for genocide breeds more genocide. Each time such horrors are inflicted on our species, our species is scarred and deformed. Worse still, if we do nothing about it, it becomes the new norm, doubling the crime. We pronounce

lofty norms, but we do not enforce them. This makes a sham of the law, while lulling us into a false sense of security and righteousness. Yet violent realities jolt us, and in more lucid moments we shudder at the realization that today the de facto norm is that genocide pays, and the irresponsibility of the powers-that-be made it so.

Genocide is crime against humanity, and like all crimes it must be addressed by the community in defense of the community's own safety and integrity. Tragically, self-interest weakens resolve and bends principles. Hence a century later, the beneficiaries of the Armenian Genocide continue to extract profit from the crime. Those beneficiaries are not just the perpetrators and their allies but many other indifferent or self-interested bystanders who myopically place their profit ahead of the well-being of our species, coarsening our common humanity and leaving the world a worse place for future generations. In pursuit of the petty advantages and rivalries of the day, they imperil their own children and grandchildren. This is the world that the powers-that-be have made and try desperately to sustain, but it is unsustainable. Wrongs not timely corrected do not go away. They compound. There is no escape from the downward spiral of dehumanization other than to end the world's addiction to covering up horrific wrongs, its penchant for engaging in quid-pro-quo politics, and its self-indulgent habit of living at the expense of victims of crime and injustice. This addiction condemns us all – perpetrators, victims, beneficiaries, bystanders – to be hostages of the past. It is time to give perpetrators and beneficiaries another opportunity to mend their ways, to rectify injuries, to atone for wrongs, and to restore balance to a world that is spinning out of control. Calling things by their right name is a first step toward creating such opportunities for restoring humanity to health and sanity.