

**Bethnahrin National Council**



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The Honorable Joe Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

March 31, 2021

Dear President Biden,

During World War I, the Ottoman Turks carried out one of the largest genocides in world history, killing over 1.5 million Armenians, 500,000 Syriacs (Arameans–Assyrians–Chaldeans), and 350,000 Greeks. His Holiness Pope Francis declared it “the first genocide of the 20th century”.

As we approach the 24th of April, Armenian Genocide Memorial Day, the Armenian people, as well as the Syriac (Aramean–Assyrian–Chaldean) and Greek peoples, await your statement and urge you to recognize the victims of these atrocities not only for our sake, but for all victims of genocide and mass killing, so that the trauma they experienced may be recognized.

During the genocide of 1915 against Christian communities, more than 500,000 Syriacs (Arameans–Assyrians–Chaldeans) were murdered. Women and children were forced on death marches or to convert to Islam or face torture and death. Their religious, social, and cultural identity was deliberately eradicated, and their assets and way of life destroyed and appropriated by the Ottoman Turks. The U.S. Ambassador to Turkey between 1913–1916, Henry Morgenthau, put it clearly in his testimony:

*“The Armenians are not the only subject people in Turkey which have suffered from this policy of making Turkey exclusively the country of the Turks. The story which I have told about the Armenians I could also tell with certain modifications about the Greeks and the Syrians (Syriacs) ... it was probably for the reason that the civilized world did not protest against these deportations that the Turks afterward decided to apply the same methods on a larger scale not only to the Greeks but to the Armenians, Syrians (Syriacs), Nestorians, and others of its subject peoples.”*

The modern state of Turkey, the successor of the Ottoman Empire, ridicules the surviving communities that were killed by the Turkish sword during the genocide and continues their persecution by denying there ever was a genocide.

On May 4, 2020, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan confirmed his intent to deal with what is left of these communities in Turkey when he stated, “We do not allow terrorist leftovers of the sword in our country to attempt to carry out [terrorist] activities ... Their number has decreased a lot, but they still exist.” The word Sayfo, the term used by Syriacs (Arameans–Assyrians–Chaldeans) for the genocide, is a Syriac word meaning “The Sword” and is well-known in Turkey as a synonym for the genocide.

Today, they revile us publicly using polarizing propaganda that brand us as terrorists and a threat to the state in order to continue to oppress us, demean us, and to steal our future in the region. By not acknowledging their wrongdoing in the past, they have the potential to exterminate us again. The phrase ‘never again’ is only meaningful if the international community forces Turkey to face its own history while recognizing their current rhetoric is followed by actions that has dire consequences for our people in Turkey and the surrounding countries where many survivors settled. The list is long and includes the recent invasion of peaceful regions of northern Syria, paying for mercenaries and weapons to be used in Libya in defiance of the U.N. imposed arms embargo, exacerbating tensions with NATO ally Greece in the eastern Mediterranean, cross-border military operations into northern Iraq, recurring verbal attacks on Israel, and Turkey’s involvement in Azerbaijan as part of the offensive in largely Christian Nagorno-Karabakh.

We want to reconcile old wounds in the hopes of preventing new ones. But there can be no reconciliation without accountability. We are dedicated to the promotion of the recognition of the rights, historical truth and justice in the Middle East. Without this, our people cannot create secure political and social environments to ensure their survival among fractures and upheavals in the region. As a long-term solution, we believe that this historical truth of the 1915 Ottoman Turkish Genocide against Armenians, Syriacs (Arameans–Assyrians–Chaldeans), and Greeks should be clarified and recognized in order to put appropriate and necessary policy measures in place to prevent future aggression against our people.

The United States, as the leader of the free world and who has a long relationship with the Republic of Turkey, is in a unique position to help Turkey face its history and put it on a path towards peace and stability.

We ask you, Mr. President, to include in the recognition of the genocide of the Armenian people the genocide of Syriacs (Arameans–Assyrians–Chaldeans) and Greeks as recognized by the Senate and House of Representatives in 2019.

We ask you to recognize what happened to us in the past so that such events are not repeated in the future. Recognition would not only benefit our people but would also push Turkey to confront its past and, by so doing, set it on a path towards peace and stability.

The Executive Council of the  
Bethnahrain National Council