

September 9, 2022

Dear Governor Newsom,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to **AB 1801**, which not only adds a so-called “**Genocide Remembrance Day**” to the list of state holidays, it equates this day with **April 24**. State schools would be closed on April 24, and community colleges would be authorized to likewise close on April 24. The bill was introduced by Assembly member Adrin Nazarian, and after amendment, was passed in Senate and Assembly last month.

If one were ever to show an example of an ethnicity-driven, divisive, and politically motivated legislative bill, AB 1801 would come at the top of the list. Nazarian is of Armenian descent, Chair of the California Armenian Legislative Caucus, and lobbies for the recognition of so-called Armenian, Assyrian and Greek genocides. April 24 is the day Armenians commemorate “Armenian genocide.”

The fact that this bill was introduced and legislatively debated and approved is a shame. The bill is a clever way to inject “Armenian genocide” into California educational system - and beyond.

“Armenian genocide” is not an established fact. Yes, some historians call the 1915-16 events involving Armenians in Ottoman Anatolia “genocide,” but others, e.g., 69 American scholars that issued a public declaration in 1985, disagree. As do the 124 Turkish academicians who issued a similar proclamation in 2001.

But more importantly, there is the law, and in America law is King. The term genocide is a legal term, and according to Article VI of the 1948 UN Genocide Convention, persons charged with this crime can only be tried and declared guilty by a competent tribunal as defined by that article. Yet, there exists no such court determination for “Armenian genocide.”

Strangely enough, AB 1801 lumps “Armenian genocide” with the official Rwandan and Cambodian genocides. Even more strange, the officially recognized Bosnian Genocide, whereby the victims were Moslem and assailants Christian, is not mentioned in AB 1801. Thus AB 1801 has a strong undercurrent of anti-Turk, anti-Moslem sentiment.

Prof. Dr. Justin McCarthy has masterfully described how distorted missionary reports combined with British propaganda before and during First World I created an enduring prejudice involving the “Terrible Turk” in the West, in particular America. AB 1801 is a manifestation of such prejudice.

Further, court decisions in Europe between 2003 and 2017 have established that: (a) recognition of “Armenian genocide” is a purely political statement, (b) there is no resemblance between Holocaust and “Armenian genocide,” (c) legislative and executive branches have no authority to pass judgment on the crime of genocide.

Now, one must ask: What gives the right to the California legislators to declare the Armenian events in Ottoman Anatolia “genocide”? Isn't it obvious that having April 24 as a state holiday on a newly legislated “**Genocide Remembrance Day**” is a round-about way of recognizing “Armenian genocide” and declaring the Ottoman Turks guilty?

Recognition of “Armenian genocide” is ex post facto application of the 1948 Genocide Convention, and under US Constitution both federal and state governments are prohibited from enacting such laws. The UN has also not recognized “Armenian genocide.”

But there is more: AB 1801, if it becomes law, will not only discourage or shut off any legitimate discourse on a historical event, thereby depriving the students and teachers alike of their First Amendment rights, it will put students of Turkish descent under undue psychological stress. These students will be bullied or ostracized by their friends, and they will suffer emotionally, affecting their self-esteem. They may even be subjected to physical abuse.

Dear Governor Newsom, you must be aware of the terrorist ASALA and JCAG Armenian organizations that were active between 1973 and 1998. One of the terrorists was Hampig Sassounian, the assassin of Los Angeles Turkish Consul General Kemal Arıkan in 1982. You capitulated to the powerful ANCA-WR Armenian lobby in March 2021 when you opened the door for the release from prison of this terrorist. That was reminiscent of Governor George Deukmeyan pardoning another Armenian terrorist Gourgen Yanikian, who assassinated two LA Turkish Consular officers in 1973.

All this is behind us, Governor Newsom; but I hope this time you will rise above ethnic politics and do the right thing by **vetoing AB 1801**. The bill would also put a large financial burden on the state budget, and that is another reason to reject it.

Sincerely,
Ferruh Demirmen, Ph.D., Stanford Univ. '69.
ferruh@demirmen.com