

mark the importance of environmental protection and responsible living. As the leaders of this great Nation, we must collaborate in a bipartisan fashion to promote environmental policies that make sense to this country. We do not want to continue to drink water that is contaminated and polluted. We do not want to breathe smoke-filled air. We do not want to develop life-threatening diseases from water, air, and other environmental hazards. Poor environmental management affects everyone, and environmental justice does, in fact, matter.

We ask, how many children must develop lead poisoning before we get serious about that issue. Do we want the Nation's most precious animals to perish from the Earth? Do we want to live in neighborhoods that are surrounded by nuclear power plants? Do we want to breathe a thick layer of smog from contaminated air before we feel that a clean air policy is important? Will there come a time when we must go to the local grocery store and purchase bottled air?

Many of our urban communities are currently in serious unrest due to many different environmental problems. Today we must make a new dedication toward bringing a more proper balance to the widening gap between community standards based upon their economic status. People in our poorest communities are struggling for environmental justice, from Louisiana's "Cancer Alley" to the Native American reservations' nuclear problems to the people along the border in the maquiladora region, and for the communities where I live on the south and west sides of Chicago.

Furthermore, millions of people live in housing surrounded by physical environments that are overburdened with environmental problems and hazards untold, waste, toxins, dioxins, incinerators, petrochemical plants, polluted air and unsafe drinking water. These factors all combine to pose a real and grave threat to the future of our Nation's public health.

So, as we mark the 31st anniversary of the first Earth Day, we glory in the progress that has been made, but must strive to continue to develop strong environmental policies that help protect our Earth.

#### COMMEMORATION OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor on this very special and important day to join my colleagues and individuals throughout the world in commemorating the 86th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. We must never forget the tragedy of the Armenian Genocide, and this commemoration makes an important contribution to making sure that we never do.

When most people hear the word "genocide" they immediately think of Hitler and his persecution of the Jews during World War II. Many individuals are unaware that the first genocide of the 20th century occurred during World War I and was perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire against the Armenian people.

Concerned that the Armenian people would move to establish their own government, the Ottoman Empire embarked on a reign of terror that resulted in the massacre of over 1.5 million Armenians, men, women and children. This atrocious crime began on April 15, 1915, when the Ottoman Empire arrested, exiled, and eventually killed hundreds of Armenian religious, political, and intellectual leaders.

Once they had eliminated the Armenian people's leadership, they turned their attention to the Armenians that were serving in the Ottoman army. These soldiers were disarmed and placed in labor camps where they were either starved or executed. The Armenian people, lacking political leadership and deprived of young, able-bodied men who could fight against the Ottoman onslaught were then deported from every region of Turkish Armenia. The images of human suffering from the Armenian Genocide are graphic and as haunting as the pictures of the Holocaust.

Why, then, it must be asked, are so many people unaware of the Armenian Genocide? I believe the answer is found in the international community's response to this disturbing event or, I should say, lack of response. At the end of World War I, those responsible for ordering and implementing the Armenian Genocide were never brought to justice, and the world casually forgot about the suffering and pain of the Armenian people, and that proved to be a grave mistake. In a speech that is now recorded, a speech made by Adolf Hitler just prior to the invasion of Poland in 1939, he justified his brutal tactics with the infamous statement, "Who remembers the extermination of the Armenians?"

Tragically, 6 years later, the Nazis had exterminated 6 million Jews. Never has the phrase, "those who forget the past will be destined to repeat it" been more applicable. If the international community had spoken out against this merciless slaughtering of the Armenian people instead of ignoring it, the horrors of the Holocaust might never have taken place.

Mr. Speaker, as we commemorate the 86th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, I believe it is time to give this event its rightful place in history. This afternoon and this evening, let us pay homage to those who fell victim to the Ottoman oppressors and tell the story, the story of the forgotten genocide. This, for the sake of the Armenian heritage, is certainly a story that must be heard.

#### ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA

Washington, DC.

The Armenian Assembly of America, Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide

On April 24, we remember and mourn the victims of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Not a single family went untouched; none were spared the pain of that brutal slaughter. Because its victims and witnesses were ignored and its lessons unlearned, the Genocide set the stage for the Holocaust and the genocides that followed. The 20th century's first genocide continues to cast its dark shadow over the 21st century.

The Turkish people and the Republic of Turkey should recognize that it is in their own best interest to come to terms with the role their Ottoman predecessors played in the Armenian Genocide and reject denial. No other country in the world should support Turkey's indefensible position. There is a growing awareness and understanding of this fact, even within Turkey itself. We were encouraged this year by reports from Turkey that public discussion of the topic has increased significantly.

It is our hope that the Turkish people, confronted with international recognition and spurred by desire to finally join the European family of nations, will reconcile with their past. Such reconciliation will lay the groundwork to build a better future.

HIRAIR HOVNANIAN,  
Chairman, Board of  
Trustees.

VAN Z. KRİKORIAN,  
Chairman, Board of  
Directors.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FILNER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### REMEMBERING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. SWEENEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SWEENEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend those who join me tonight in educating the world about the Armenian Genocide. I think I bring some special province to this occasion in that I am the grandson of Oscar Chaderjain, a first-generation Armenian American, and the son of Mary Chaderjain. So therefore, this is an issue that is near and dear to my heart.

Mr. Speaker, for those who question whether the genocide ever occurred in the first instance, I must say that I have no doubt that it did. My grandfather was a first-hand witness to the bloodshed. He often told us of his experience of holding his uncle's arms, with his cousin, as Turkish soldiers executed that grammar school teacher. He also told us that the world first took notice of the genocide on April 24, 1915, when 254 Armenian intellectuals were arrested by Turkish authorities in Istanbul and taken to the distant provinces of Ayash and Chankiri, where many of them were later massacred.

Throughout the genocide, Turkish authorities ordered the evacuation of