

Rep. Henry A. Waxman  
Commemorating the Armenian Genocide  
April 24, 2007

Mr. Speaker. Each year on April 24, Armenian communities around the world gather in somber commemoration of the genocide that began in 1915. Sadly, after 92 years, their grief is only compounded by those who aggressively deny or raise doubt about this troubling chapter of history.

This should be a day reserved for honoring the memory of those who were killed and paying tribute to the strength of those who survived. It should be a time to reflect on the personal narratives of those who were exiled, the historical evidence of villages and communities that were destroyed, and diplomatic cables from U.S. officials that described the mass deportations and other atrocities. It should be an opportunity to resolve ourselves to fight crimes against humanity in all forms and all places. Instead, year after year, April 24 unleashes a battle of semantics.

Those who acknowledge what happened in Armenia as a “tragedy,” a “catastrophe,” or a “massacre” are correct. But nothing other than the term “genocide” can wholly characterize the systematic deportation of nearly 2 million Armenians and the deliberate annihilation of 1.5 million men, women and children. Anything short of that is unfair to those who perished and unhelpful to our plight against future acts of genocide.