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House of Representatives

COMMEMORATING THE 93RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and their descendants. This year marks the 93rd anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

The genocide of the Armenian people by the Ottoman Empire during World War I represents a major tragedy of the modern age. Carried out between 1915 and 1923, the Armenian Genocide was a systematic and deliberate campaign by the Turkish Ottoman Empire to destroy its Armenian minority. While there is no consensus as to how many Armenians lost their lives, there is general agreement among western scholars that between 500,000 and 1,500,000 Armenians died and that nearly all Armenians were exiled from their homeland.

The date of the onset of the genocide is conventionally held to be April 24, 1915, the day that Ottoman authorities arrested some 250 Armenian intellectuals and community leaders in Istanbul. These Armenian political, religious, educational, and intellectual leaders were

arrested, deported, and mercilessly put to death. Over the next few years, many Armenians were murdered outright or were deported via forced marches under such agonizing conditions that they died from exhaustion or starvation before they reached their destination.

At that time, the word "genocide" had not yet been coined. Nonetheless, many governments decried the mass murder of the Armenians as extermination of a people, a crime against humanity, and the murder of a nation.

We must honor the truth of the past because denial makes it more likely that genocide will happen again. We must recognize and condemn the atrocities that took place against the Armenian people. The time has come to pass the Armenian Genocide Resolution. I urge my colleagues to support this important piece of legislation and give the Armenian people the respect and recognition they deserve.