



Barack Obama on the Importance of US-Armenia Relations

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I am proud of my strong record on issues of concern to the one and a half million Americans of Armenian heritage in the United States. I warmly welcome the support of this vibrant and politically active community as we change how our government works here at home, and restore American leadership abroad.

I am a strong supporter of a U.S.-Armenian relationship that advances our common security and strengthens Armenian democracy. As President, I will maintain our assistance to Armenia, which has been a reliable partner in the fight against terrorism and extremism. I will promote Armenian security by seeking an end to the Turkish and Azerbaijani blockades, and by working for a lasting and durable settlement of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict that is agreeable to all parties, and based upon America's founding commitment to the principles of democracy and self determination. And my Administration will help foster Armenia's growth and development through expanded trade and targeted aid, and by strengthening the commercial, political, military, developmental, and cultural relationships between the U.S. and Armenian governments.

I also share with Armenian Americans – so many of whom are descended from genocide survivors - a principled commitment to commemorating and ending genocide. That starts with acknowledging the tragic instances of genocide in world history. As a U.S. Senator, I have stood with the Armenian American community in calling for Turkey's acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide. Two years ago, I criticized the Secretary of State for the firing of U.S. Ambassador to Armenia, John Evans, after he properly used the term "genocide" to describe Turkey's slaughter of thousands of Armenians starting in 1915. I shared with Secretary Rice my firmly held conviction that the Armenian Genocide is not an allegation, a personal opinion, or a point of view, but rather a widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming body of historical evidence. The facts are undeniable. An official policy that calls on diplomats to distort the historical facts is an untenable policy. As a senator, I strongly support passage of the Armenian Genocide Resolution (H.Res.106 and S.Res.106), and as President I will recognize the Armenian Genocide.

Genocide, sadly, persists to this day, and threatens our common security and common humanity. Tragically, we are witnessing in Sudan many of the same brutal tactics - displacement, starvation, and mass slaughter - that were used by the Ottoman authorities against defenseless Armenians back in 1915. I have visited

Darfurian refugee camps, pushed for the deployment of a robust multinational force for Darfur, and urged divestment from companies doing business in Sudan. America deserves a leader who speaks truthfully about the Armenian Genocide and responds forcefully to all genocides. I intend to be that President.

I look forward, as President, to continuing my active engagement with Armenian American leaders on the full range of issues of concern to the Armenian American community. Together, we will build, in new and exciting ways, upon the enduring ties and shared values that have bound together the American and Armenian peoples for more than a century.