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April 13, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President:

As the proud Representative of the largest Armenian-American community in the country, I urge you to properly characterize the murder of 1.5 million Armenian men, women and children as “genocide” in your annual statement marking the April 24 anniversary of the start of the Armenian Genocide.

Ninety-six years ago this month, in the spring of 1915, the government of the Ottoman Empire launched a campaign against its Armenian population. Wholesale massacres, forced marches through blistering deserts, rapes, and looting were visited upon the Armenians of eastern Anatolia. By the time the killings ended in 1923, one and a half million Armenians were dead and the world’s oldest Christian nation had been shattered – with its survivors scattered around the world.

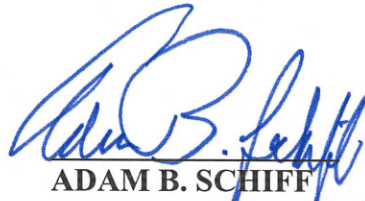
Before becoming President, you spoke repeatedly of the massacres of Armenians at the hands of the Ottoman government as genocide, a view shared by the overwhelming majority of historians, including some notable Turkish historians. The Armenian Genocide has also been recognized by many local and state governments here in the United States and by many governments around the world.

Unfortunately, both last year and in 2009, you did not use the term “genocide” to describe the events of 1915-23. Perhaps hoping that by holding off on recognition, some in the Administration believed that the United States could catalyze a possible reconciliation between Armenia and Turkey. It is clear now that the Protocols process was a gambit by Ankara to prevent the Administration from using the word “genocide,” and to forestall consideration of a genocide resolution by the Congress. Turkey’s

professed desire for reconciliation with Armenia was illusory. Now that the truth has been revealed, I ask you to return to the clarity you so forcefully expressed in 2008.

Mr. President, you have always been a leader on the important issue of human rights. I urge you to stand with the ever-dwindling number of survivors, as well as the descendants of others, who survived the Armenian Genocide and continue to suffer the “double killing” of denial, by referring to it as a genocide.

Sincerely,



ADAM B. SCHIFF
Member of Congress