

AM-LA--Hebrew Congregations, La Bjt,475<
Committee Softens Armenian Genocide Resolution<

NEW ORLEANS (AP) A Senate resolution honoring the deaths early this century of more than a million Armenians failed to win support from a committee of Reform Jews meeting in New Orleans, a rabbi said Sunday.

Rabbi Kenneth I. Segel of Fresno, Calif., said he will try to convince the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to back the legislation at a Sunday evening or Monday morning business session.

An estimated 1.5 million Armenians died in massacres that took place before the emergence of the modern Turkish state from the remains of the Ottoman Empire. Turks contend the deaths occurred in the civil turmoil before the new republic was formed.

The Senate Judiciary Committee last month approved a resolution by U.S. Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan., recognizing the 75th anniversary of the Armenian genocide with a memorial day on April 24, 1990.

The Bush administration opposes the measure, fearing that adoption would damage relations with Turkey, a NATO ally.

Some Jewish leaders have said that Israel urged American Jewish groups to lobby against the legislation.

Segel, rabbi of Temple Beth Israel, said his resolution endorsing the Senate legislation was rejected by the union's resolution committee Saturday night.

"I argued that it's not a political issue. It's a moral issue. But it was not a compelling enough argument. Obviously, it's a political issue, and as a result it was overwhelmingly defeated," Segel said.

The committee rejected the use of the word "genocide" to describe the deaths and stripped out endorsement of the Senate resolution, Segel said.

In its place, the committee approved a watered-down version which refers to the incident as a massacre or a tragedy.

The committee approved commending the council of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington for agreeing to include in its displays information about "the Armenian and other genocides," he said.

The document also calls for an education campaign that encourages the union's 820 U.S. and Canadian congregations to learn about the incident, he said.

Segel said backers of the Senate resolution will try to amend the union's compromise document during a convention business session.

"I would hope that we could be successful," Segel said. "I'm realistic. I'm not saying it's impossible ... but people don't know about the issue."

Segel said some Jews fear that calling the Armenian deaths genocide, a willful campaign to destroy a race or people, will take the edge off the horror of the Holocaust.

"The feel that there's an equation in many people's minds, holocaust and genocide are virtually the same thing, therefore it dilutes ... the bestiality of the Nazi Holocaust."

But even the compromise union resolution would be better than nothing, Segel said.

"Is it better than no statement? Yes. It does very clearly recognize the reality of the Armenian tragedy," he said.

Dole criticizes Israeli lobbying

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"I am disappointed that members of the Jewish community, who have suffered such unspeakable horrors because of the Nazi genocide, should fail to be sensitive to the similar feelings which affect the Armenian-American community," the Kansas Republican said in a Senate floor speech.

The resolution, approved last month by the Senate Judiciary Committee and awaiting floor action, commemorates the 1.5 million Armenians killed in the final years of the Ottoman Empire in Turkey.

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Dole Criticizes Reported Israeli Lobbying<

By JIM DRINKARD=

Associated Press Writer=

WASHINGTON (AP) With controversy growing over a congressional resolution condemning the genocide of Armenians in the early 1900s, Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole on Friday criticized reported Israeli lobbying against the measure.

"I am disappointed that members of the Jewish community, who have suffered such unspeakable horrors because of the Nazi genocide, should fail to be sensitive to the similar feelings which affect the Armenian-American community," the Kansas Republican said in a Senate floor speech.

The resolution, approved last month by the Senate Judiciary Committee and awaiting floor action, commemorates the 1.5 million Armenians killed in the final years of the Ottoman Empire in Turkey. The resolution has become a bitter irritant in U.S. relations with Turkey, an important NATO ally and host to U.S. military bases.

Turkey already has restricted privileges of some American personnel at the bases.

Dole said he was particularly concerned by reports that Israel's embassy in Washington had actively lobbied against the resolution, which could be a violation of the law barring foreign diplomats from seeking to influence legislation.

Israeli Ambassador Moshe Arad assured him that "no member of the embassy staff has approached any Jewish organization" to lobby against the resolution, Dole said, but reports of lobbying activity have persisted.

Arad, in a letter to Dole, noted that Turkey is the only non-Arab Moslem country in the world to have diplomatic relations with Israel, and added, "It is therefore only natural that issues concerning Turkey are the subject of our attention."

Dole sent another letter this week to Arad asking further assurances that no embassy official has approached any American group or person offering views on the legislation.

President Bush, who has been caught in a bind over the issue, wrote to Dole on Friday opposing the resolution but acknowledging the concerns of Armenians and asking to join in an effort to draft a resolution that would be more acceptable to Turkey.

Dole was scheduled to meet next week with White House chief of staff John Sununu to work out some solution to the problem. Dole remained confident that the resolution could pass on the Senate floor, even though the number of sponsors of his bill has shrunk from more than 60 to 47 under White House pressure.

Bush, during the presidential campaign last year, acknowledged that the United States "must acknowledge the attempted genocide of the Armenian people in the last years of the Ottoman Empire."

But he now faces international complications because of that promise, and Turkish officials are threatening far more serious consequences if Dole's resolution passes including cutting off relations with the United States.