

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2024 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2024-D062
Title: Support and Solidarity with Armenia and Preventing further Genocide
Proposer: Swanson, The Rev. Kirstin
Topic: Ecumenism, International Relations

Directly Related: (Attached)

2012-A016 Affirm the Moral Responsibility to Protect Populations from Atrocities

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

2022-A205 Extend Greetings to The Armenian Apostolic Church Eastern Diocese
2006-C043 Refer a Resolution on Genocide Remembrance Day in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*
(Referred)

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1973 through 2022, selecting “direct” resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The “direct” resolutions are attached and “indirect” resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives through the [Research Request Form](#).

D062 - Support and Solidarity with Armenia and Preventing further Genocide

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Swanson, The Rev. Kirstin

Endorsed by: Ostendorf, The Rev. Kristen, Adzima, The Rev. Melissa, Alexandre, The Rev. Hickman, Flexer, the Rev. Katharine, Hill, The Rev. Heather

Has Budget Implications: No

Cost:

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Requests New Interim Body: No

Directs an Interim Body: No

Directs Dfms Staff: Yes

Directs Dioceses: No

Directs Executive Council: No

HiA: No House Assigned

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: No Committee Assigned

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents:

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That the Episcopal Church reaffirm its centuries-long ecumenical relationship with the Armenian Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the Episcopal Church promote educational initiatives concerning the history of the Armenian Church and the historic and present relationship between the Episcopal and Armenian churches, including but not limited to webinars, informational resources, lectures, and dialogue groups; and be it further

Resolved, That the Episcopal Church stand in solidarity with the people of Armenia and the refugees from Nagorno Karabagh as they face the ongoing threat of genocide; and condemns all efforts by Azerbaijan and other regional actors that diminish and threaten to eliminate the ancient, indigenous Armenian identity and presence from the region; and be it further

Resolved, That the 81st General Convention authorize the Office of Government Relations and Episcopal Public Policy Network to advocate for and promote U.S. government policies and legislation to further this position, including but not limited to sanctions on Azerbaijan and other regional actors, humanitarian relief to Armenia, and diplomatic interventions.

Explanation

The Armenian Church is the oldest national Christian church, established in 301 C.E., and it has had a centuries-old ecumenical relationship with the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. Nevertheless, little is known about Armenia or its 3,000-year-old history.

The ecumenical ties between the Armenian and Episcopal churches date back to the 19th century, shining strongly during the Hamidian Massacres and Armenian Genocide of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with the Episcopal Church providing both spiritual and financial support to Armenian refugees. In many cities around the United States, the Episcopal Church provided a home for Armenians to hold their divine liturgies until they were able to establish churches of their own. So abiding was this friendship that the Episcopal Church was trusted to consecrate and ordain Armenian priests in the period before, during, and after the genocide when Armenian bishops were unable to travel to the United States.

The history of the 1915 genocide, however, is not a settled matter of the past. Turkey has maintained, as a matter of national policy and position, a denial of its occurrence, despite abundant documented evidence of a systemic, coordinated policy of extermination by the Ottoman government of its Armenian population. Now, after a period of dormancy for the majority of the 20th century, the active threat of genocide has returned to Armenia, this time through Turkey's partner state, Azerbaijan.

In September 2023 Azerbaijan attacked the Armenian ethnic enclave of Nagorno Karabagh and forced the expulsion of almost its total population (about 120,000 persons). Following this violent offensive, Azerbaijan has continued to demand concessions of Armenia's sovereign land, changes to Armenia's government, and initiated small scale border incursions as bargaining chips for peace – threatening to continue these offensives if Armenia does not accede to its demands. To date, however, each concession by Armenia has invited further aggression and additional demands by Azerbaijan in order to achieve "peace." This is on display as Turkey and Azerbaijan push to build a connecting corridor through Armenia which would deny Armenia any sovereignty over this corridor in its own land, effectively beginning an annexation process of the sovereign country of Armenia itself.

Concurrent with these military and diplomatic attacks, photo and satellite evidence show that Azerbaijan is engaged in the destruction and erasure of ancient Armenian churches, monasteries, and cemeteries – acts of cultural genocide seeking to eliminate any trace of the religious and cultural legacy of Armenians in their ancestral homeland. This supports the Azeri policy of propaganda which refers to Armenia as "Western Azerbaijan" and denies Armenians' ancient and indigenous existence on the land.

No peace agreement has been reached by Armenia and Azerbaijan. There has been hardly any notice of these events by the English speaking press and little support from the

American government. At minimum, sanctions and humanitarian aid are necessary. Without international intervention, Armenia's existence - and countless remaining treasures of ancient Christianity - are at stake.

References:

<https://www.genocidewatch.com/countries-at-risk>

https://luismorenoocampo.com/lmo_en/report-genocides-december-2023/

https://www.lemkininstitute.com/_files/ugd/72b3ef_b0cc4e1c24c04105af9b4caf887294a1.pdf

There are currently two bills introduced that call for action on behalf of Armenia: HR 8141 <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/8141> and HR 7288 <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/7288>

<https://cmep.org/armenia/>

see also Shattuck, Jr., Gardiner H. *Christian Homeland: Episcopalians and the Middle East, 1820-1958*. Oxford University Press, 2023.

<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/armenian-literary-tradition/armenia.html#:~:text=Modern%20DNA%20research%20indicates%20that,those%20that%20ruled%20the%20area.>

<http://anglicanhistory.org/orthodoxy/hagopian1926.html>

<https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/671084>

<http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/american.php>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/pauliddon/2021/07/27/the-growing-military-cooperation-between-turkey-and-azerbaijan/?sh=5357395d1b3b>

<https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/investigation-armenian-fears-of-a-concentration-camp-in-nagorno-karabakh-may-have-been-warranted/>

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/11/02/azerbaijan-armenia-zangezur-corridor/>

<https://eurasianet.org/azerbaijan-begins-controversial-renovation-of-armenian-church>

<https://www.rferl.org/a/azerbaijan-armenia-nagorno-karabakh-heritage-destruction-karintak-dasalti/32918998.html>

<https://time.com/6322574/cultural-genocide-armenia-nagorno-karabakh-essay/>

<https://www.uscirf.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscirf-releases-report-religious-freedom-azerbaijan>

<https://caucasusheritage.cornell.edu/>

Note: this resolution and/or its explanation contains external references, such as URLs of websites, that may not be in the required languages of General Convention. Because of copyright restrictions, the General Convention cannot provide translations. However, your web browser may be able to provide a machine translation into another language. If you need assistance with this, please contact gc.support@episcopalchurch.org.



Resolution Number: 2012-A016
Title: Affirm the Moral Responsibility to Protect Populations from Atrocities
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention affirms that our Lord's commandment to love thy neighbor implies a binding moral responsibility on sovereign states to protect their populations from mass atrocities, including genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as defined by international law; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention welcomes the United Nations' establishment of the responsibility to protect as an international norm, and its efforts to uphold it through collective action when individual states fail to do so; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention commends the President of the United States for adopting the responsibility to protect as a principle of United States foreign policy; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention most strongly discourages the abuse of this norm to rationalize military actions in sovereign states for political ends; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention encourages the Presiding Bishop through the Office of Government Relations to join the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect so as to shape the continued development of precautionary principles for this norm and promote its faithful implementation; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention urges all Episcopalians to understand and reflect upon the principle of the responsibility to protect, and to advocate for its adherence by their respective governmental leaders.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 2012* (New York: General Convention, 2012), p. 226.