

An Open Letter to the New England Community

There has been much discussion about the Anti-Defamation League's positions with regard to Turkey and the Armenians as well as its relevance to ADL programs combating prejudice and bigotry in New England.

Clearly, whatever one's views on the issue, it is regrettable that such an important program as ADL's No Place for Hate® Program, which provides a framework for fighting hatred and bigotry while increasing diversity awareness and fostering respect, has been mired in a controversy having nothing to do with the program, its goals, or its objectives. Parents, teachers, children and grandchildren in dozens of towns in New England and in communities across the country have greatly benefited from this highly successful and well-respected nationwide initiative.

We hope that communities in New England will continue to benefit from these programs. But we should be clear. This controversy occurred because of the distortion of our position on a complex issue.

ADL has acknowledged and never denied the massacres of hundreds of thousands of Armenians — and by some accounts more than one million — at the hands of the Ottoman Empire in 1915-1918.

We believe that the Turkish government must do more than it has to confront its history and to seek reconciliation with the Armenian people. We have said that to the Turkish government and its officials, we will continue to do so, and we take this opportunity to repeat it publicly. We will continue to work to convince Turkey to pursue recognition and reconciliation, and we will seek ways to encourage this process.

We believe that legislative efforts outside of Turkey are counterproductive to the goal of having Turkey itself come to grips with its past. We take no position on what action Congress should take on House Resolution 106. The Jewish community in Turkey has clearly expressed to us and other major American Jewish organizations its concerns about the impact of Congressional action on them, and we cannot ignore those concerns. We are also keenly aware that Turkey is a key strategic ally and friend of the United States and a staunch friend of Israel, and that in the struggle between Islamic extremists and moderate Islam, Turkey is the most critical country in the world.

In our almost seven decades in New England, we are proud of the community partnerships we have built and the results we have achieved working with thousands of organizations, elected officials and individuals committed to making this region No Place for Hate®.

We cannot let a disagreement on how to proceed on one issue undermine all our joint good work.

Let us recommit ourselves to working together to achieve our shared goals.

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Glen S. Lewy, National Chair Abraham H. Foxman, National Director

