

STATEMENT BY EDWARD M. MEZVINSKY
UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ON THE
UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
ON THE GENOCIDE REPORT

Mr. Chairman, this Commission that prides itself as the conscience of nations would do well to heed the advice that "those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it."

The ascent of man has not been without terrible tragedies and inhumanity. But few crimes stand out so dramatically as the crime of genocide, a crime which, while directed against a particular ethnic or national group, is in fact a crime against all mankind.

Let it not be said by future generations that we have forgotten everything and learned nothing. The Genocide Convention should be evidence that we have learned from the past. But in fact we all know of cases in our own time when crimes against a whole people begin to approach the dimensions of the tragedy that has befallen some peoples in the past.

We have listened with special attention to the discussion that has taken place on Chapter XII of the Subcommittee's report at its 31st session. This is the chapter reporting on the Subcommittee's report prepared

by its Special Rapporteur on the question of the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide.

On the question of the retention of paragraph 30 which appeared in the earlier progress report, the position of my Government is the following. We would have preferred that the Special Rapporteur had retained the substance covered by that paragraph as well as having listed other specific historical cases that one could characterize as genocide. I would recall that paragraph 30 read "passing to the modern era, one may note the existence of relatively full documentation dealing with the massacres of Armenians which have been described as the first case of genocide in the Twentieth Century."

I doubt if there is a greater contribution we can make to future generations, or a greater tribute we can pay to all people who have suffered than to make a serious effort to learn from the past and to pledge ourselves to one great commitment: "never again."

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