

American Jewish Committee

April 23, 2014

AJC Pays Tribute to Memories of Victims of the Meds Yeghern

April 23, 2014 – New York – In a month of solemn remembrance of the atrocities of the last century – from the 20th anniversary of the start of the Rwandan genocide to the annual commemoration in Israel and the United States of the Holocaust – we pause in mournful tribute to the memories of the estimated 1.5 million victims of the Meds Yeghern, the Genocide of Armenians, committed in the final years of the Ottoman Empire.

AJC calls on the government of Turkey, a republic founded years after the empire's dissolution, to not only provide at long last full access, as the government has pledged, to the historical record of that dark period of mass murder, forced relocation, death marches, sundering of families, and other abuses – but to address the realities the records reveal. The process of healing of this nearly century-old wound can only begin when the truth of that sorrowful era is confronted.

“As our organization has testified and written on various occasions, the atrocities committed against ethnic Armenians under Ottoman rule were an unspeakable crime against humanity,” said AJC Executive Director David Harris. “For the often-invoked but too-seldom-fulfilled phrase ‘Never again’ to have real meaning, the full details of that period must be acknowledged.”

“We identify with the core message of the 2002 Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, by then-Harvard University Professor, and now U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power that history must be faced, the dictates of conscience heeded – or we are doomed to endless brutalities by the powerful against the weak,” Harris added.

“As successive horrors painfully remind us,” Harris concluded, “we each bear the obligation of remembrance as a necessary step toward preventing such acts in the future. We stand in solidarity with people of good will everywhere in marking the 99th anniversary of the onset of the Meds Yeghern – the first, and not the last, instance of ethnic massacre and genocide of the 20th century.”