

kNOw GENOCIDE

United Against Denial

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HEALEY, REILLY, MARKEY TO JOIN ANTI-GENOCIDE COALITION ANNOUNCEMENT TODAY AT STATE HOUSE

*Armenian, Jewish, Rwandan, Irish and Other Groups to Launch
Campaign Against Genocide and Denial*

BOSTON, April 21, 2006 – Lt. Governor Kerry Healey, Attorney General Thomas Reilly, and U.S. Representative Edward Markey will join representatives of Boston area ethnic and religious organizations and other public officials at a State House rally today to launch a new coalition aimed at fighting genocide denial and raising awareness of past and current genocide crimes. The event is scheduled for 12:45 p.m. on the front stairs of the State House.

The group, called kNOw Genocide, was formed partly in response to a case pending in federal court in Boston seeking to introduce materials into Massachusetts classrooms denying that the Armenian genocide occurred. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the Turkish government and other Turkish groups, including the Assembly of Turkish American Associations, which filed the suit, have refused to acknowledge the genocide, which left more than a million Armenians dead and drove hundreds of thousands more from their homeland. (April 24th marks the 91st anniversary of the start of the Armenian genocide. On that date in 1915, the Ottoman Turkish government began rounding up and executing Armenian intellectuals and community leaders.)

“Denial of the Armenian genocide or any other genocide leads to the kinds of killings we see today in Darfur,” said Anthony Barsamian, an organizer of kNOw Genocide. “When we refuse to confront these terrible crimes of the past, we give license to those who seek to engage in new ethnic and religious slaughters.”

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The coalition includes, the Massachusetts Council of Churches, the Jewish Community Relations Council, Rwanda Outlook, the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, the Irish Immigration Center, the Armenian Assembly of America, the Armenian National Committees of Massachusetts, the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University, the Genocide Intervention Network, and the University of Minnesota Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

Others expected to attend today's announcement are several survivors of the Armenian genocide (all in their 90's) and representatives of each of the coalition member organizations. State Representatives Rachel Kaprielian and Peter Koutoujian and State Senator Stephen Tolman will also attend, as will other elected officials to be announced later.

The coalition will conduct a series of events in the coming weeks designed to draw attention to the court case regarding the Massachusetts curriculum and to build broad public support against the ATAA effort. Virtually every major genocide scholar and organization has recognized the Armenian genocide, including Nobel Prize winner Elie Weisel, Pulitzer Prize winner Samantha Power, the International Association of Genocide Scholars (the definitive group of scholars on the subject), the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide in Jerusalem, and the Institute for the Study of Genocide.

The coalition will also support efforts to stop the genocide in Darfur. Some humanitarian groups estimate that more than 400,000 people have already died in the Darfur region of Sudan and more than a million have been driven from their homes and now face starvation and disease as they flee or are forced to live in refugee camps.

Today's rally will follow the annual State House commemoration of the Armenian genocide. This year's ceremony will honor Taner Akcam, one of the first Turkish scholars to recognize the genocide. For his courage, Akcam received a 10-year prison sentence in 1976. He served one year and then escaped and has been living in exile since. He is currently a visiting professor at the University of Minnesota.