

Published Thursday, March 17, 2016 in The Jewish Journal

## **Recognition of Genocide Long Overdue**

**By Andrew Tarsy**

Prominent Jewish communal organizations have spent years lending their credibility to a Turkish political agenda to undermine recognition of the Armenian Genocide. In the last few years, these organizations have begun to move over to the right side of history. But the work of rectifying the situation created by very powerful players in our community has barely begun.

The Anti-Defamation League in particular maintains an awkward state of semi-silence. Its vast education and intergroup relations programs continue to exclude the Armenian experience, while the League responds to its critics and skeptics with express or implied charges of antisemitism.

Israel continues to toe the line, and the United States government does the same. Both should reverse course and acknowledge the genocide. Geopolitics says they will not. For that reason and also because of the damage that has been done in our names, I continue to focus on the responsibility of the organized Jewish community in the United States and those of us who give it life.

Let's be clear: When we participate in the blurring of historical memory, we dishonor the dead and endanger the living. Because our organizations have played politics with the truth, to the great detriment of Armenian survivors and their families, American Jews have a wrong of our own to right. We have an affirmative obligation to play a meaningful role in whatever steps Armenian Americans identify as important for the healing of their collective trauma. Some might wish to have dialogue, shared learning or commemoration. Don't be surprised if a great many others want to work toward restitution and the return of stolen property. Sound familiar? What are we waiting for?

There are a handful of men and women still alive today who survived the Armenian genocide as small children. When we think we have done enough to address the devastation of the Armenian genocide, we should imagine ourselves speaking directly to them.

*Andrew Tarsy is a Senior Fellow in the Center for Peace, Democracy and Development at UMass Boston, and former Executive Director of the Anti-Defamation League's New England Region. In his day job, he is an entrepreneur in healthcare technology.*