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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DATE: May 6, 2009

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Israeli Knesset Votes to Discuss Armenian Genocide

Jerusalem—On May 5, 2009, the Israeli Knesset voted unanimously to hold a discussion on the Armenian Genocide. In an unprecedented 39 to 0 vote, the Israeli parliament decided to open discussion on a resolution put forward by Meretz leader Chaim Auron (sometimes transliterated as Oron), proposing that Israel officially recognize the Turkish genocide of Armenians during World War I.

Ynetnews.com reported Chaim Auron as saying, "It is our duty to the Armenian people and to ourselves. There are those who say we should leave it to historians to determine whether it was genocide. There are Holocaust deniers who say exactly the same thing. They rely on alleged historical sources and say there are doubts regarding the numbers and figures of the Holocaust. Who else knows like we do that there are some things you must fight for. Exactly one year ago this motion moved to the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee's table, and there it was buried. I propose that the Education Committee conduct a procedural discussion on it."

Gilad Erdan, Minister for Environmental Protection, represented the government's position to the motion by stating, "I agree that it is our moral obligation. We have a moral duty to remember the killing of Armenians." He then read out the government's response, which objects to commemorating the Genocide in the Knesset.

"Israel has never denied the terrible acts carried out against the Armenians, and I am well aware of the intensity of the emotions given the number of victims and the suffering of the Armenian people," Erdan stated. "However, the study of the events must be done through open discussion, and backed by the historical data, not a political debate in the Knesset. Because of our understanding of the pain and suffering, and so that Israel does not become a side that deals with this from a purely political place, I ask that we take this issue off the Knesset's agenda."

Zoryan Board Member and brother of the Meretz leader, Yair Auron, stated, "This is a very significant development, in that there has never been so much open support in the Knesset for the Armenian Genocide. Even if the Government succeeds in killing this particular resolution, there is clearly an increasing awareness of the Armenian Genocide

in Israel, and increasing support for its official recognition.”

The Zoryan Institute, parent organization of the International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies and the International Institute for Diaspora Studies, co-publisher of *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* and *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, is the first non-profit, international center devoted to the research and documentation of contemporary issues with a focus on Armenian social, political and cultural life, with the concern for the human rights of all. For more information please contact the Zoryan Institute by email zoryan@zoryaninstitute.org or telephone (416) 250-9807.