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## **Harman's flip-flop on Armenian Genocide resolution attacked**

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WASHINGTON - With the House Committee on Foreign Affairs voting today on declaring the massacre of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey genocide, a Southland congresswoman is coming under fire for flip-flopping on the emotionally charged resolution.

Although she co-sponsored it, Rep. Jane Harman last week wrote to the chairman of the committee urging him not to bring the resolution to a vote and declaring that she will vote against it if it reaches the floor.

Amid shouts of "genocide denier" and "You are a hypocrite and liar," the El Segundo Democrat defended her letter Saturday to about 70 Armenian students who confronted her at a political rally in Lakewood.

"I am not denying it," Harman said of the World War I-era killings that Armenians and many historians estimate at more than 1.5 million and declare were part of a planned genocide campaign.

"I come from a community where there was genocide against my people, too," Harman, who is Jewish, told the students. But, she said, Turkey at the moment is "exercising a role in the Middle East that is very important" and she didn't want to risk creating a rift with the U.S. ally.

In the letter, she told Rep. Tom Lantos, the San Mateo Democrat who chairs the foreign-affairs panel, that, although she sympathizes with the sentiments in the resolution she co-sponsored, she would vote against it because of "the timing."

The controversy comes as today's committee vote marks the first time in recent memory that the genocide resolution stands a significant chance of making it to the House floor. While the bill passed the same committee when it was under Republican control two years ago, then-speaker Dennis Hastert blocked it from going to a full House vote.

This time, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-San Francisco, is a co-sponsor and she has vowed to bring it to the floor, possibly by Thanksgiving.

Meanwhile, Turkish President Abdullah Gul warned the U.S. on Tuesday that relations between the two countries will suffer if Congress declares the events a genocide. The Bush administration also is urging Republican lawmakers to reject the resolution.

Turkey maintains that there was no plan for systematic extermination, and that Armenians were killed when they joined forces with the French and Russians to attack Turks in the chaotic aftermath of the war.

Zanku Armenian, a board member of the Armenian National Committee of America's Western Region in Glendale, called Harman's new position "the height of deception and hypocrisy."

Vahram Shemmassian, director of the Armenian Studies Department at Cal State Northridge, said today's vote will be a test for how the U.S. and its leaders stand on human rights.

"The Armenian genocide was a crime against humanity and if the United States of America is fighting for human rights, this is a good example of defending human rights and standing for American values," said Shemmassian.

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