

The Kurds and Sam Darmo's Interviews on Assyria TV and AGN TV

Fred Aprim
Mar 26, 2023

A) Assyria TV Interview

On March 19, 2023, Mr. Sam Darmo appeared on an **Assyria TV** program with Nineveh Khamo to talk about the decision of the State of Arizona's Congress regarding the latest Assyrian genocide resolution AZ HCR2044. Before the actual interview took place, the program played a video of the Arizona assembly going through its activities, including the registration of Assembly members, reading the resolution, etc. etc.

Before I continue, it is important that the readers understand the meaning of few critical terms. The State of Arizona Assyrian genocide resolution is a **Concurrent Resolution**, which proceeds through both houses of the legislature (House and Senate).¹ Concurrent resolutions don't require the governor's signature. Many concurrent resolutions similar to this type do not go through three readings either. This resolution is **non-binding**. Non-binding resolutions, both simple or concurrent, are not passed on to the executive branch to be signed into law. Non-binding resolutions differ from pure concurrent resolutions that are used for various procedural requests. Similar concurrent and non-binding resolutions offer a means for elected officials to express concerns on behalf of their constituents. They are posted publicly and possibly followed by media outlets. Additionally, they can be used to state the position of the legislature, showing a preview of how they might vote on future legislation.

What is the difference between a **concurrent resolution, proclamation and Legislation**? A concurrent resolution is a formal expression of opinion or intention made, usually voted by voice acclamation rather than a recorded vote by the legislators. A proclamation on the other hand is a public and official statement to make something known. Both non-binding resolutions and proclamations are easier to pass than what is known as bills, which are subject to legislative procedures that go through more rigorous processes, such as committee hearings. However, a resolution may be heard in committee in addition to receiving a floor vote. State level resolutions could be advanced to the Federal level, but they must state so clearly and specifically in the text. If that is the case, they could be transmitted to US Congress for example through an action by the state's Secretary of State. However, they could also remain only at the state level. Consider the 2016 Arizona's Senate Bill 1367 that called to erect an Assyrian genocide memorial monument in Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza in Phoenix. It passed the House 37-17 and the Senate 29-0, but the governor of Arizona vetoed it.² A Legislation on the other hand, must go through the full legislative process, receive recorded floor votes, are subject to amendments and must be signed into law by the Governor.

Mrs. Khamo began her simple format interview; she asked her question and Mr. Darmo answered it. There was no rebuttal or counterargument. With such interviews the interviewee gets the privilege of making any claims he/she wishes without anyone questioning those claims. The last question by Mrs. Khamo was the one that I posted on Facebook in response to her original ad about the anticipated interview. My question was simple, is this resolution part of the one that was originally initiated in 2019 by Seyfo Center.³

1 <https://apps.law.asu.edu/files/Library/ResearchGuides/Arizona%20bills%20and%20proposed%20legislation.pdf>

2 <https://legiscan.com/AZ/votes/SB1367/2016>

3 <https://www.facebook.com/AssyriaTv/videos/244034441329211>

I will breakdown my response to Mr. Darmo's answers into two sections: Mr. Darmo's statements and then the facts.

Statement 1:

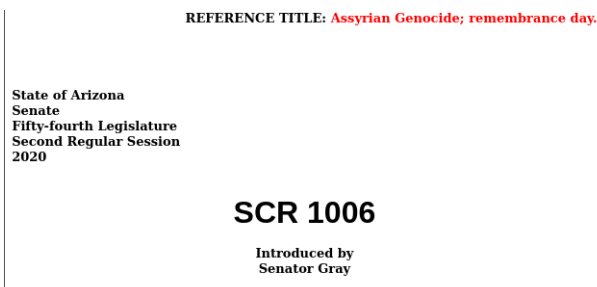
Mr. Darmo answered my on line question in the first part of his response. He said, there was no story to tell because there was no resolution in 2019. Mr. Darmo could have stopped here having answered the question, but he took advantage of the TV platform and time that were at his disposal, the absence of a counterargument and he went on a rant. He said, Fred Aprim should have gone to the archive of the Arizona State and look for the claimed 2019 resolution, which is not there, because it does not exist.

FACT 1:

I asked a simple question, because I needed to hear from Mr. Darmo his side of the story about what happened to a 2019 draft resolution. I have heard one version of that story and as they say, there is always two sides to a story. I have a copy of that draft proclamation/resolution that was submitted at the time, which included both Simele and WWI genocide.⁴ The Kurds were implicated in that draft resolution (proclamation) along with the Turks unlike the 2023 Arizona resolution that intentionally omitted the Kurds as perpetrators of genocide.

In 2019, there were civic activities by Seyfo Center. The plan was to have a resolution commemorating Assyrian genocide, but because of disagreements between various groups and personalities within the Assyrian community and the leaders in congress complicated the intricate issue of the wording of the resolution. Still, two 2020 concurrent resolutions came out from all the efforts in 2019 and earlier efforts. SCR1006 by the Arizona Senate and HCR 2006 by the Arizona House of Representatives officially passed in 2020.

SCR1006, by the Arizona Senate in 2020 Introduced by Senator Rick Gray. See link below.⁵



A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

HONORING THE VICTIMS OF THE ASSYRIAN GENOCIDE AND PROCLAIMING AUGUST 7, 2020 AS ASSYRIAN REMEMBRANCE DAY IN ARIZONA.

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

Whereas, Assyrians, an ethnic minority group, are the indigenous people of Mesopotamia who have lived in the Middle East since ancient times, including in what is today Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria; and

Whereas, Assyrians, also known as Chaldeans and Syriacs, today live around the world, including more than 600,000 in the United States and tens of thousands in Arizona; and

Whereas, between 1914 and 1923, the Assyrian Genocide occurred, during which the Ottoman Empire murdered more than 300,000 Assyrian men, women and children by methods that included mass executions, death marches, torture and starvation; and

Whereas, during the Assyrian Genocide, also known as the Seyfo Genocide, the Ottoman Turks and their Kurdish allies also systematically raped and enslaved Assyrian women and girls, forced the Assyrians from their ancestral lands and pillaged and destroyed their communities; and

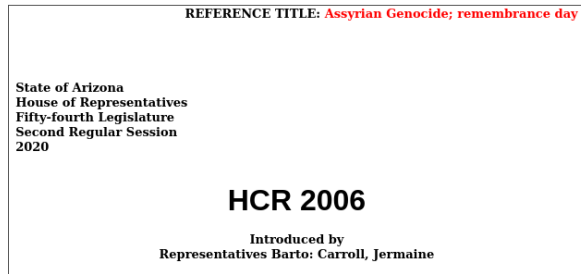
Whereas, the massacre of more than two million Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks and other Christian and religious minority populations represented the final culmination of a series of violent persecutions dating back to the late 1800s; and

And

⁴ I can e-mail you a copy if interested.

⁵ <https://www.azleg.gov/legtext/54leg/2r/bills/scr1006p.htm>

HCR 2006 by the Arizona House of Representatives. Introduced by Representative Nancy Barto. See link below⁶



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Whereas, the massacre of more than two million Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks and other Christian and religious minority populations represented the final culmination of a series of violent persecutions dating back to the late 1800s; and

These two resolutions were not born from thin air. There were earlier efforts by Seyfo Center and other Assyrians from Arizona that got involved later, which led to the passing of SCR1006 and HCR 2006 in 2020.

Statement 2:

Mr. Darro said, Fred Aprim supported the [2023] French Senate resolution which did not implicate the Kurds, but did not [support] the 2023 Arizona resolution.

FACT 2:

Mr. Darro is wrong. I did not support the 2023 French Senate resolution in my article. Click on footnote 7 below to read my article.⁷ I wrote about the evening event that was organized by the Assyro-Chaldean Association of France and I referred to the speeches of a couple of the guests: Patriarch Mar Awa Royel and Senator Valerie Boyer. Yes, I mentioned that in his speech, Patriarch Mar Awa did not mention the Kurds as perpetrators. **It was an accurate and truthful statement.** I also wrote that the resolution was the outcome of decades of hard work to bring it to reality. I did the same for the Arizona resolution article, where at the end I wrote, **“I applaud such projects”**. Click on footnote 8 below to read my article.⁸ Therefore, there was no different reaction on my part towards the two resolutions.

Statement 3:

Mr. Darro was not completely truthful when he said that the French resolution did not implicate the Kurds.

⁶ <https://www.azleg.gov/legtext/54leg/2R/bills/HCR2006P.htm>

⁷ <https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2023/Genocide%20Recognition%20by%20French%20Senate%20with%20hyperlinks.pdf>

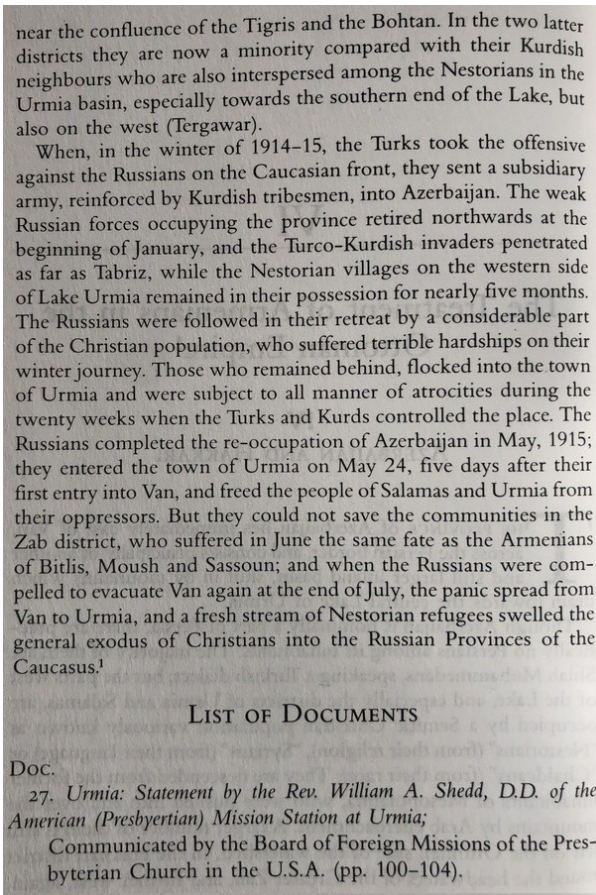
⁸ <https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2023/Arizona%20Genocide%20Resolution%20FINAL.pdf>

FACT 3:

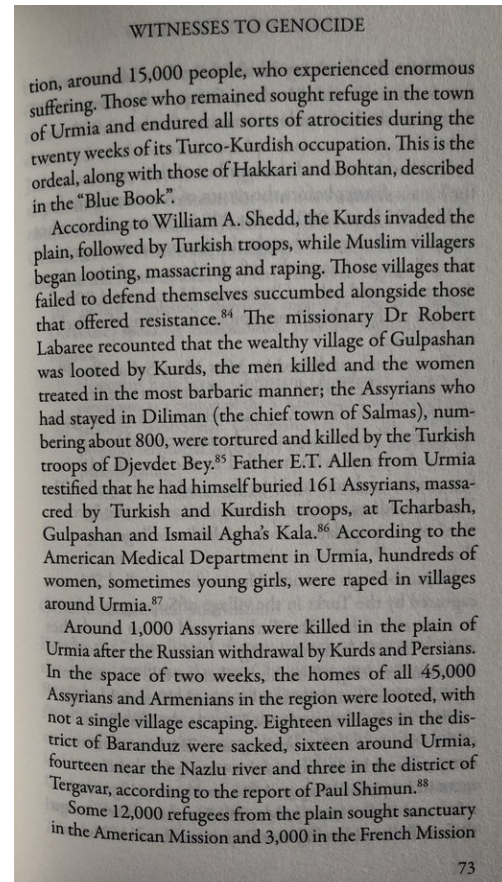
Two points:

A) We must understand that many Assyrian scholars such as Prof. Dr. Efrem Yildiz, Prof. Joseph Yacoub, and many others contributed to the French Senate resolution text. Prof. Yacoub's books implicate the Kurds.

See 2 examples of two of his books below.⁹



Book 1: "The Assyrian Question", page 58



Book 2: "Year of the Sword", page 73

B) Unlike the one-page Arizona resolution, the French Senate resolution that was registered at the Presidency of the Senate on January 6, 2023, included 5 pages in the "**Statement of Reasons**" section that preceded the final wording of the resolution. The 5 pages included several historical references about the Assyrian genocide. Those references mentioned both Turks and Kurds as perpetrators of the Assyrian genocide.¹⁰

See pages 4 and 7 of the "**Statement of Reasons**" of the 2023 French Senate Resolution below where Kurds are mentioned.

⁹ See for example "The Assyrian Question", page 58 and "Year of the Sword", page 73.

¹⁰ <https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2023/French%20Senate%20Resolution%2020227%20&%205%20pages%20Statement%20of%20Reasons.pdf>

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Le génocide assyrien se réfère au meurtre en masse de la population « assyrienne » de l'Empire ottoman lors de la Première Guerre mondiale. La population assyrienne du nord de la Mésopotamie (régions du sud-est de l'actuelle Turquie et la région du nord-ouest de l'Iran) a alors été déplacée de force et massacrée par les forces ottomanes (turques) et les forces kurdes.

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Plus de 250 000 Assyro-Chaldéens-Syriaques – ce qui représente plus de la moitié de la communauté – ont péri des mains des Turcs et des irréguliers kurdes utilisés à ces fins. Tous les documents montrent à l'évidence que ces massacres furent des actes « combinés et concertés » par les autorités ottomanes et qu'il ne s'agit nullement d'actes isolés ou incontrôlés.

Statement 4:

Mr. Darmo stressed that certain groups [that are involved in such projects] ask for donations while he does not.

FACT 4:

We know that all Assyrian institutions and organizations do ask and solicit for donations, have members who contribute with their membership or other types of gifts so that the institutions cover their expenses and are able to be involved in such projects. For example, Seyfo Center that is involved in activities related to the Assyrian genocide, is an Assyrian institution with worldwide activities and it has around 8 or 9 board members in the US alone with reputable and educated Assyrians and it needs to cover its expenses and activities.

Mr. Darmo, on the other hand, is an individual who works with few other Assyrian activists and individuals that get involved in civic matters. Most activists do not ask for donations or payments in exchange for the time they invest to help the community or their people in general. Mr. Darmo did not need to make a public announcement about that. **I applaud all those activists and volunteers who do so and invest their time to serve their people.** Of course, there is the exception. We know few activists who are offered salaries for their full-time professional work. We are also aware of the few activists who have been issued a payment for a particular service that they promised to provide or accomplish and Mr. Darmo knows what I mean.

B) AGN TV Interview

On Mar 26, 2023 Mr. Darmo appeared on **AGN TV** in a program “Talk of The Nation” with David al-Bazi. He continued his desperate efforts to justify why the Kurds were not mentioned in the resolution as perpetrators of the Assyrian genocide.

Al-Bazi asked him, why Kurds were not mentioned in the resolution.

Mr. Darmo responded: As you know, the Turkish army included Germans, Bulgarians, Persians, Arabs, Yezidis, Kurds – it was not only Kurds. Then he said that we are not writing a history in this one-page resolution so we cannot write everything. Later he said, only some Kurds participated.¹¹

Response: This is shocking and absurd. We all know for a fact that it has been mainly the Kurds who are occupying the Assyrians’ villages and lands after our people were forced to flee and evacuate Hakkari and Urmia. It is mainly the Kurds again who are illegally occupying our villages in northern Iraq. The Bulgarians, Persians, Arabs, Germans are not occupying our lands. If Mr. Darmo does not want to mention Kurds because some Kurds participated in the genocide, then we should not mention the Turks as well, because not all Turks participated in the genocide. Also, to add Kurds next to the Turks will not add to the length of the one-page resolution – it is only one word. Enough of excuses.

Living in America gives Mr. Darmo the freedom to claim what he wants as the First Amendment of the US Constitution protects freedom of speech, but he cannot expect from all people to agree with everything that he claims. We also have the freedom of issuing a rebuttal when statements that he makes are inaccurate or completely untruth.

The Assyrian genocide by the Kurds and Turks has been well documented. The massacres, seizure of lands and abduction of Assyrian women committed by Kurds took place in the 1840s and then in the 1890s. Then came the genocide of WWI. It did not stop there. Certain Kurdish tribes participated in the 1933 Simele Assyrian massacre. Assyrian villages have been seized and occupied by Kurds in the 1960s. Even today, Assyrians are having problems related to land within the Kurdish occupied region. Since the 1840s, the Kurds have murdered more Assyrians than Turks, Persians and Arabs. The Assyrians must tell the whole truth about the Assyrian genocide. We cannot incriminate and blame the Turks only while intentionally omitting the Kurds. I know that Mr. Darmo knows his history well, but his obligation to the leaders of the Assyrian Church of the East prevents him from telling the whole truth about the Kurds and that is the unfortunate part that I have been trying to stress. We will continue to tell the truth, because the Kurdish leaders are not taking the necessary steps to show the Assyrians that they mean well. Why is Simko, the murderer of martyred Patriarch Mar Benyamin Shimun, for example, still proclaimed by the Kurdistan Regional Government as a Kurdish national hero? Let the Kurdish leaders denounce Simko, the murderer. Let the Kurdish leaders issue an apology for the hundreds of thousands of Assyrians that have been massacred by Kurds.

Finally, I hope that the Assyrians work harder and smarter in order to allow their voices and concerns reach the president of the United States and US Congress. For this to happen, these resolutions must have the correct language and vehicle otherwise they will remain on the states’ level. Read HCM2007 that was sponsored by Rep. Gail Griffin this year.¹² This memorial to Congress has the correct language and vehicle to do so.

11 <https://www.facebook.com/AssyrianGlobalNetwork/videos/1402180390533640>

12 <https://www.azleg.gov/legtext/56leg/1R/bills/HCM2007H.pdf>