

The Simele Resolutions in US Congress

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Three Simele (Semele) Resolutions have been introduced in the US House of Representatives in the past few years.

Before we proceed, we must understand the meaning and effectiveness of a couple of terms. A resolution is something short of a bill. If a resolution passes in both the US House and the Senate and then it is signed by the President, then it becomes effective and powerful. Resolutions that are only approved by the House of Representatives are not binding law – they are basically toothless; however, they express the collective sentiment of the House on a particular issue, person, or event.

The First Resolution (Not Passed)

116th Congress / 2nd Session

12/02/2020

H. Res. (House Resolution) 1246

This resolution expresses the sense of the House of Representatives that it is U.S. policy to officially recognize and remember the Massacre (the 1933 killing of up to 3,000 Assyrian Christian men, women, and children by the government of Iraq), to reject efforts to associate the U.S. government with denial of the massacre, and to encourage education and public understanding of the massacre and its relevance to modern-day crimes against humanity.¹

The Second Resolution (Not Passed)

117th Congress / 1st Session

02/22/2021

H. Res.143

The Wording of this resolution is the same as the first one.²

The Third Resolution

118th Congress / 1st Session. Introduced in the House of Representatives.

H. Res. 472

06/06/2023

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives regarding United States policy recognizing the Semele Massacre of 1933.³

The resolution states: “Whereas the Assyrians had not been included in the Sykes- Picot Agreement between the British and French Governments after the First World War and were otherwise left vulnerable as refugees in the newly formed Kingdom of Iraq.”

Fred’s Response: WWI was between 1914 and 1918. The Sykes- Picot Agreement was signed in 1916 while the war was still going on. Therefore, Sykes-Picot was not after WWI as the resolution indicates. Also, it is strange that the Sykes-Picot Agreement is mentioned, but the very critical Treaty of Sèvres (1920) and Treaty of Lausanne (1923) are not.

1 <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/1246/text?s=1&r=27>

2 <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-resolution/143/text?s=1&r=25>

3 <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-resolution/472/text>

The resolution states: *“Whereas, in August 1933, after the surrender of those Assyrians who pledged their loyalties to the government of Iraq and laid down their arms in the interest of peace, the armed forces of the Government of Iraq targeted them for calculated slaughter that came to be known as the Semele Massacre;”*

Fred’s Response: Intentionally omitting General Bekir Sidqi, the leader of the Iraqi army, because he is Kurdish is unacceptable. Just because today’s Kurdish leaders are in good relations with our Church leaders and with the U.S. government, we cannot tell half the truth in official documents and set wrong precedence.

The resolution states: *“Whereas, at the time of the massacres, over 60 Assyrian villages were looted and destroyed by various populations urged on to destroy the Assyrian people.”*

Fred’s response: What is meant by various populations? Were the looters of the Assyrian villages and the destroyers of the Assyrian properties in 1933 from Planet Mars? Why cannot the resolution say that those involved in the looting and destruction were certain Kurdish and Arab tribes? Why hide the truth? Today, the heirs of those Kurdish tribes are illegally occupying many of the historic Assyrian villages. Will the resolution return those villages to the Assyrians? The answer is no.

H. Res 472 settled on three decisions:

- (1) to commemorate the Semele Massacre through official recognition and remembrance;
- (2) to reject efforts to enlist, engage, or otherwise associate the United States Government with denial of the Semele Massacre; and
- (3) to encourage education and public understanding of the facts of the Semele Massacre, including the United States role in the humanitarian relief effort, and the relevance of the Semele Massacre to modern-day crimes against humanity. End.

Fred’s Final Words:

The third settled decision of this resolution encourages the education and public understanding of the facts of the massacre. Does the current wording of the resolution mention all the facts? The answer is in the negative. Furthermore, an individual involved in this process claimed that Assyrians cannot go after the Kurds, because the Kurds do not have a country. But I argue that the Kurds do have a government, i.e. the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), which controls and oversees the affairs of three Iraqi governorates that make the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Many Kurdish leaders within the KRG are the heir of those Kurdish tribes that participated in the WWI Assyrian Genocide and later in the 1933 Simele massacre just as the modern Turkish government is the heir of the Ottoman Turks who committed WWI Assyrian Genocide.

Plato argued that telling the truth is a moral principle, a virtue, thus the truth promotes justice. This resolution comes short from telling the whole truth; therefore, it is ineffectual. The resolution fails to provide any specific solutions or demands in regards to Assyrian lands and properties lost during Simele. The sole reference to a role by the US in some humanitarian relief is worded vaguely. The three settled on decisions make the resolution not only ineffectual, but inadequate as well. We still hope that the resolution passes through the House and the Senate, then gets signed by the US President so Assyrians could reap something from it.