

A RESOLUTION honoring Azerbaijani Americans and recognizing the 24th anniversary of the Khojaly Massacre in Azerbaijan.

WHEREAS, February 26, 2016, marks the 24th anniversary of the Khojaly Massacre in Azerbaijan, and the observance of this tragic date inspires reflection by individuals across the globe; and

WHEREAS, on February 25 and 26, 1992, Armenian armed forces, supported and accompanied by armored vehicles of the Soviet/Russian 366th motorized rifle regiment, attacked and occupied the besieged town of Khojaly as part of the armed aggression and ethnic cleansing that had been taking place in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan since 1988; and

WHEREAS, when the residents of this town attempted to flee the area, they were ambushed and fired on by the Armenian and Russian troops, resulting in the largest civilian massacre and war crime in all of Europe at the time; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the genocidal act, of the approximately 6,000 inhabitants of the town, 613 civilians were killed (including 106 women, 83 children, and 70 elderly); 150 "missing" (presumed dead); 487 wounded, including 76 children; and 1,270 taken hostage; and

WHEREAS, the massacre was reported by major American news publications and has been described by the Human Rights Watch/Helsinki Organization as "the largest massacre to date in the conflict" and as a violation by Armenian forces of customary law regarding the treatment of civilians in war zones, thus amounting to a crime against humanity and a war crime; moreover, numerous governments around the world and U.S. states (New Jersey, Texas, Maine, and Massachusetts) have condemned the atrocities; and

WHEREAS, by presidential decree on March 26, 1998, in Azerbaijan, the annihilation of the residents of Khojaly was recognized as an act of genocide; the Parliamentary Union of the OIC on its seventh meeting officially recognized the genocidal massacre of the fleeing residents of Khojaly and called upon all 51 member-

states to acknowledge it as an act of genocide; and

WHEREAS, this tragic event, which was later called by experts and became known as "Azerbaijani Srebrenica," is a sobering reminder of the terrible carnage that can be inflicted in wartime and the enduring need for greater understanding, communication, and tolerance among people the world over; and

WHEREAS, a number of military personnel who took part in committing this crime continue to hold senior positions in the government of Armenia; and

WHEREAS, in the words of the current President of Armenia and then the Armenian military commander Serzh Sargsyan: "Before Khojali, the Azerbaijanis thought they were joking with us, they thought that the Armenians were people who could not raise their hand against the civilian population. We were able to break that [stereotype]"; and

WHEREAS, an Armenian American author, Markar Melkonian, wrote about his terrorist brother's involvement, "By the morning of February 26, the refugees had made it to the eastern cusp of Mountainous Karabagh and had begun working their way downhill, toward safety of the Azeri city of Agdam, about six miles away. There, in the hillocks and within sight of safety, Mountainous Karabagh soldiers had chased them down...fighters had then unsheathed the knives they had carried on their hips for so long, and began stabbing..."; and

WHEREAS, the United States Government, through U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. District Court, has deported Armenian soldiers who have been engaged in the "massacre of countless villagers" and "crimes against humanity" in Azerbaijan during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; and

WHEREAS, a Khojaly Massacre petition by the U.S. Azeris Network on the White House Web site became the second-largest petition at the time, gathering over 125,000 signatures within a month, and thus receiving an official response from the United States Government; and

WHEREAS, on February 25, 2013, Speaker John Boehner presented a memorial urging that the 21st anniversary of the Khojaly tragedy be commemorated; and

WHEREAS, the UN Security Council Resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993), and 884 (1993), which call on Armenian forces to end the occupation of the territory of Azerbaijan, continue to be unfulfilled; the UN General Assembly, the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the U.S. Azeris Network, as well as the U.S. State Department and the White House, supported the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan, including its Nagorno-Karabakh region;

NOW, THEREFORE,

Be it resolved by the Senate of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

➔Section 1. The Senate hereby honors Azerbaijani Americans and recognizes the 24th anniversary of the Khojaly Massacre in Azerbaijan.

➔Section 2. The Clerk of the Senate is directed to transmit a copy of this Resolution to Daniel Nahum, 1040 Cane Run Road, Georgetown, Kentucky 40324.