

REFERENCE TITLE: Semele massacre; Assyrian martyrs day

State of Arizona
House of Representatives
Fifty-fifth Legislature
First Regular Session
2021

HR 2002

Introduced by
Representative Blackman

A RESOLUTION

HONORING THE VICTIMS OF THE SEMELE ASSYRIAN MASSACRE AND PROCLAIMING
AUGUST 7, 2021 AS ASSYRIAN MARTYRS DAY IN ARIZONA.

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

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

4 Whereas, the United States has a history of recognizing and
5 condemning atrocities experienced by vulnerable and native minorities; and

6 Whereas, World War I brought untold suffering to the world, and
7 particularly to the Assyrian people, who lost two-thirds of their numbers
8 as victims of violence, famine and disease inflicted on them by hostile
9 forces and faced a difficult predicament as new nation-states formed
10 around them; and

11 Whereas, because the Assyrians were not included in the Sykes-Picot
12 agreement between the British and French governments after World War I,
13 they were left vulnerable as refugees with no clear future in the
14 newly-formed kingdom of Iraq; and

15 Whereas, the government of Iraq became increasingly hostile toward
16 the Assyrians and exiled their leader, the Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun
17 XXIII, to Cyprus with the full authorization of the British government,
18 despite the Assyrians being recognized as Britain's and the West's
19 "smallest ally" in the Middle East; and

20 Whereas, the British government, having drawn the Assyrian people
21 into the service of the British empire, knew that such an association
22 would endanger the already-defenseless Assyrians. Nevertheless, they
23 disregarded the growing animosities being fostered against the Assyrians
24 by various officials of the Iraqi government; and

25 Whereas, in August 1933, after surrendering and pledging loyalty to
26 the Iraqi government in the interest of peace, Assyrians were targeted for
27 a calculated annihilation that came to be known as the Semele Massacre;
28 and

29 Whereas, on August 7, 1933, thousands of unarmed men, women and
30 children were slaughtered using machine guns and bayonets. Over 60
31 Assyrian villages were looted and destroyed by various populations that
32 intended to destroy the Assyrian people; and

33 Whereas, the entire world and, in particular, the British government
34 were horrified at the indiscriminate slaughter of Assyrian people, both
35 young and old; and

36 Whereas, the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of
37 2018 (P.L. 115-441) established that atrocities prevention represents a
38 United States national interest and affirms a government-wide strategy to
39 identify, prevent and respond to the risk of atrocities by "strengthening
40 diplomatic response and the effective use of foreign assistance to support
41 appropriate transitional justice measures, including criminal
42 accountability, for past atrocities"; and

1 Whereas, the State of Arizona is a global leader of human rights,
2 including recognizing and repudiating crimes against humanity. It is
3 fitting that the people of this state honor the victims of the Semele
4 Assyrian Massacre of 1933.

5 Therefore

6 Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of Arizona:

7 1. That the Members of the House of Representatives recognize the
8 Semele Assyrian Massacre of 1933 as a crime against humanity.

9 2. That the Members of the House of Representatives honor the
10 memory of the thousands of unarmed men, women and children who were
11 murdered during the Semele Assyrian Massacre of 1933.

12 3. That the Members of the House of Representatives proclaim August
13 7, 2021 as Assyrian Martyrs Day in the State of Arizona.