

**BY:** Senator KAPLAN

**MEMORIALIZING** Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim August 7, 2019, as Assyrian Memorial Day in the State of New York

**WHEREAS,** This Legislative Body is justly proud to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim August 7, 2019, as Assyrian Memorial Day in the State of New York, as it is observed by Assyrians worldwide, celebrating the Assyrian cultural identity; and

**WHEREAS,** During the Assyrian Genocide of 1915-1918, 750,000 men, women, and children of Assyrian descent lost their lives at the hands of the Ottoman Turkish Empire in its attempt to systematically eliminate the Assyrian race, while hundreds of thousands became homeless and stateless refugees; and

**WHEREAS,** August 7, 1933, is recognized by the International Association of Genocide Scholars as the date on which 3,000 thousand Assyrians were killed at the orders of the Iraqi government in an event known as the Simele Massacre, which continued the legacy of persecution exemplified by the 1915 Assyrian Genocide; and

**WHEREAS,** August 7th, globally observed by the Assyrian community as Assyrian Memorial Day, is in remembrance of the Simele Massacre and of all persecution the Assyrian people have faced as a result of their distinct and ancient ethnic and religious identity; and

**WHEREAS,** Starting in 2014, following ISIS' takeover of the Iraqi government, the Assyrians have suffered persecution at the hands of ISIS which has been recognized as a genocide by the European Parliament, the United States Department of State and House of Representatives, and now, with this Resolution, the New York State Government; and

**WHEREAS,** Between the years of 2003 and 2018, the Assyrian population in its ancestral homeland of Mesopotamia, where it has existed for over 6,000 years, dropped from 1,500,000 to under 250,000 people, due to the genocide committed against it by ISIS; and

**WHEREAS,** The crimes against humanity committed by ISIS against Assyrians have not only resulted in the killing and displacement of disturbing numbers of innocent people, but have also had the consequence of the enslavement and rape of countless women and children, and the destroying of ancient churches, artifacts, and cities that were bastions of the Assyrian cultural heritage; and

**WHEREAS,** The Assyrian people have been denied the right to self-determination on their ancestral lands; they have received no form of reparations for their tragic losses; and without an autonomous state in their ancestral homeland, they lack protection from targeted attacks that have been historically persistent; and

**WHEREAS,** The Assyrians living in their homeland of Mesopotamia speak the Assyrian-Aramaic language, practice their distinct and ancient rite of Christianity, and celebrate their cultural customs regularly; and

Assyrians in diaspora cannot practice, and in effect preserve, these cultural bastions to the degree that the homeland population does due to the effects of cultural assimilation; therefore, the Assyrian homeland population is the foundation that keeps the Assyrian identity alive; and

**WHEREAS,** With the Assyrian population in Mesopotamia having been nearly destroyed by the genocide committed by ISIS, Assyrians in diaspora are losing hope for the future of their venerable and storied ethnic identity, as it is now quickly fading away; and

**WHEREAS,** The response of the people of New York State to the recent refugee crisis shows there is a strong desire for government to stand in solidarity with persecuted and downtrodden ethnic groups; and

**WHEREAS,** The State of New York endeavors to champion human rights and the recognition of diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious identities, and to uphold the support that constituents have shown for underserved and persecuted minorities; and

**WHEREAS,** Assyrians in New York, and throughout the world, have not been provided with justice for the crimes perpetrated against the Assyrian nation; and, as a result of this, these crimes have been repeated several times in recent history, to the point of near annihilation of the Assyrian homeland community; and

**WHEREAS,** New York State is a leader in terms of progress and social justice; we acknowledge that this Resolution makes New York State the first state to recognize Assyrian Memorial Day, and to recognize the Assyrian Genocide as a distinct historical event; it is our hope that other states will follow this model and recognize these two important events; and

**WHEREAS,** By consistently remembering and forcefully condemning the atrocities committed against the Assyrians, honoring the cultural identity of this suffering group, and calling for action to aid them in their struggles, we can provide the American public with a greater awareness of their plight, and provide the Assyrian diaspora community with a symbol of hope for the future, which can in turn spur efforts to enact justice on their behalf; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED,** That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim August 7, 2019, as Assyrian Memorial Day in the State of New York; and be it further

**RESOLVED,** That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York; and the Assyrian American Association of Yonkers.