



## THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

*"I am confident that the whole history of the human race contains no such horrible episode as this. The great massacres and persecutions of the past seem almost insignificant when compared to the sufferings of the Armenian race in 1915."*

– Henry Morgenthau

U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire (1913 – 1916)

April 24, 1915

April 24 symbolizes the beginning of the Young Turk government's organized genocidal campaign to eliminate Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. On that day in 1915, the Ottoman Turkish government arrested some 200 Armenian community leaders, most of whom were later murdered.

### Background

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Armenian population of the decaying Ottoman Empire became the target of heightened persecution. These persecutions culminated in a three-decade period during which the Armenians were systematically uprooted from their homeland of 3,000 years and eliminated through deportation and massacres.

Sultan Abdul Hamid's brutal reign ended in 1908 when a coalition known as the Young Turks came to power and established a new constitution. The new rulers promised many reforms and an improvement in the treatment of minorities in the empire. By 1914, however, the triumvirate of Young Turk dictators, Talat, Enver and Jemal Pashas, had seized power. They adopted the ultra-nationalist ideology of pan-Turkism and set out to Turkify the country's minorities, beginning with the Armenians. They welcomed World War I, as an opportunity to pursue a final solution to the "Armenian Question", i.e. forcible removal of the Armenian population from its homeland. With the outset of the War, this premeditated plan was put into effect and deportations and exterminations began under the Ottoman government's order and supervision.



### The Pattern of Persecution: 1894-1923

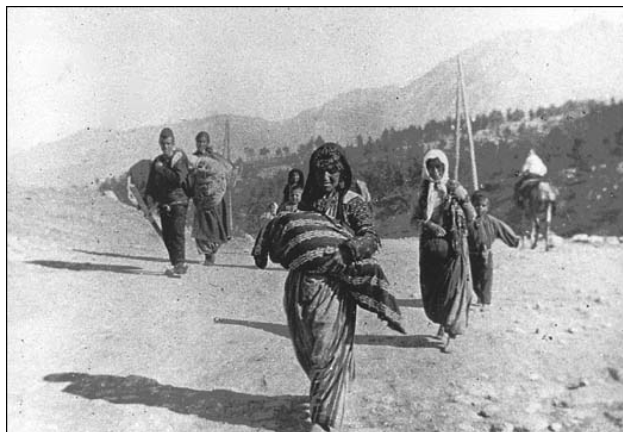
<b>1894-1896</b>	300,000 Armenians massacred during the reign of the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II.
<b>1909</b>	30,000 Armenians massacred in Cilicia; Armenian villages and city quarters looted and burned.
<b>1915-1923</b>	1,500,000 Armenians perished, and 500,000 survivors forcibly exiled from their ancestral homes in Ottoman Turkey.

At the beginning of World War I, there were some 2,100,000 Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire. Following the Armenian Genocide, fewer than 100,000 declared Armenians remained in Turkey.

### Timeline of Genocide

**On August 2, 1914**, the Ottoman army mobilized. Like their fellow Turkish citizens, all able-bodied Armenian men, with few exceptions, were called up for military service. Beginning in February, 1915, the Armenians in the armed forces were segregated into labor battalions, disarmed, and ultimately worked to death or massacred.

**In August 1914**, the Young Turk government began to release murderers and other convicted criminals from prisons throughout Asia Minor to be enrolled in the so-called "Special Organization" of the Ottoman Security Service for the express purpose of annihilating the Armenians. Entire whole villages in the eastern provinces were eradicated in the fall and winter of 1914-1915.



**In April, 1915**, Ottoman forces disarmed the Armenian civilian population in southern Turkey, and deported them to the Salt Desert in Central Turkey. It also began deportations to the Syrian Desert in the distant south. Packed into boxcars, or forced to walk, often without food or water for weeks, tens of thousands quickly perished. Deportations and massacres soon became the plight of Armenians in other areas as well.

**On April 24, 1915**, about 200 Armenian religious, political, and intellectual leaders were arrested in the capital, Istanbul, taken to remote locations and murdered. Similar measures to liquidate the religious and secular leadership of the Armenian communities were implemented throughout the empire in all Armenian centers.

**On May 27, 1915**, a Deportation Edict was formally promulgated. Soon afterwards, Armenians throughout the Ottoman Empire were deported on short notice. Adult males were usually separated from the group and massacred. The remaining women, children and elderly were marched across Armenia to the Syrian Desert. Thousands were kidnapped. Most of the deportees were massacred by brigands and the Special Organization, or died of starvation, disease or exposure.

## First Genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century



Professor Raphael Lemkin, a lawyer who escaped with his life during the 1939 Nazi invasion of Poland, is the key figure in the history of establishing genocide as a crime under international law. Having lost 49 members of his own family in the World War II Holocaust, he coined the word "genocide" in 1944. He worked tirelessly until his death in 1959 toward the adoption of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which was ratified by the U.S. in 1988.

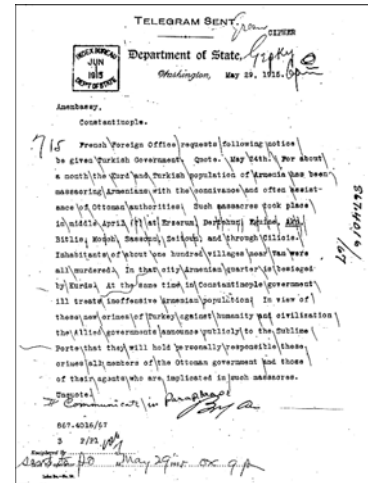
Lemkin was the first to characterize the atrocities of 1915-1923 as the "Armenian Genocide." During his effort to obtain ratification of the Genocide Convention, Lemkin repeatedly cited the Armenian Genocide and the Jewish Holocaust as prototypes for the crimes of genocide.

## Documentation of the Armenian Genocide

The U.S. National Archives contain thousands of pages documenting the premeditated extermination of the Armenian people. American intervention prevented the full realization of Ottoman Turkey's genocidal plan, and U.S. humanitarian assistance to survivors saved countless starving Armenians from further suffering.

The U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, acting on instructions from Secretaries of State William Jennings Bryan and Robert Lansing, protested the slaughter of the Armenians to the Young Turk leaders. Other nations, including Great Britain, France and Russia accused Turkey of "crimes against humanity." An organization known as Near East Relief, chartered by an act of the U.S. Congress, contributed some \$116 million between 1915 and 1930 to aid Armenian Genocide survivors. In addition, 132,000 orphans became foster children in American families and owe their lives to this effort.

While the U.S. record on the Armenian Genocide provides the most comprehensive coverage of the events of 1915 to 1923, the official records of many other countries corroborate the evidence gathered by U.S. diplomats. Researchers and historians have established that all major European states, whether friends or foes of the Ottoman Empire during World War I, hold substantial archival collections of documents furnishing further evidence of the atrocities. These countries include Austria, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Vatican and Russia.



## International Affirmation of the Armenian Genocide



A growing number of countries and multinational organizations, including the European Parliament and Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, have recognized and reaffirmed the Armenian Genocide as historical fact. In the last several years alone, the parliaments of 19 countries including Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay, the Vatican and Venezuela have passed resolutions officially recognizing the Armenian Genocide. In 2000

and 2001, Pope John Paul II issued statements condemning the Armenian Genocide as a "prologue to horrors" that would follow in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the European Parliament repeatedly called on Turkey to publicly recognize the Genocide.

In an independent legal analysis of the events of 1915, the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) concluded: "*Events, viewed collectively, can thus be said to include all of the elements of the crime of genocide as defined in the [UN Genocide] Convention, and legal scholars as well as historians, politicians, journalists and other people would be justified in continuing to so describe them.*"

A resolution adopted by The International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) states: "*That this assembly of the Association of Genocide Scholars in its conference held in Montreal, June 11-13, 1997, reaffirms that the mass murder of Armenians in Turkey in 1915 is a case of genocide which conforms to the statutes of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. It further condemns the denial of the Armenian Genocide by the Turkish government and its official and unofficial agents and supporters.*"

## U.S. Affirmation of the Armenian Genocide

### Presidential Statements

April 24, 2001

White House Statement by **President George W. Bush**:

*"Today marks the commemoration of one of the great tragedies of history: the forced exile and annihilation of approximately 1.5 million Armenians in the closing years of the Ottoman Empire. These infamous killings darkened the 20th century and continue to haunt us to this day. Today, I join Armenian Americans and the Armenian community abroad to mourn the loss of so many innocent lives. I ask all Americans to reflect on these terrible events."*



April 24, 1996

White House Statement on Armenian Remembrance Day by **President Bill Clinton**:

*"Eighty-one years ago today, in the city of Constantinople, more than two hundred Armenian civic, political, and intellectual leaders were arrested, deported and subsequently executed. That day marked the beginning of one of this century's darkest moments. I join with Armenians around the world, on this solemn day, in commemorating the senseless deportations and massacres of one and a half million Armenians that took place from 1915-1923 in the Ottoman Empire."*

April 22, 1981

Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust

Proclamation 4838, by **President Ronald Reagan**:

*"Like the genocide of the Armenians before it, and the genocide of the Cambodians which followed it – and like too many other such persecutions of too many other peoples – the lessons of the Holocaust must never be forgotten."*

May 16, 1978

Remarks at the White House Reception Honoring Armenian-Americans by **President Jimmy Carter**:

*"But it's generally not known in the world that in the years preceding 1916, there was a concerted effort made to eliminate all the Armenian people, probably one of the greatest tragedies that ever befell any group. And there weren't any Nuremberg trials."*

### Congressional Resolutions

April 8, 1975

**House Resolution 148**

*"April 24, 1975, is hereby designated as 'National Day of Remembrance of Man's Inhumanity to Man'...for all victims of genocide, especially the one and one-half million people of Armenian ancestry who succumbed to the genocide perpetrated in 1915."*





March 13, 1920

**Senate Resolution 359**

*"...the testimony adduced at the hearings conducted by the sub-committee of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations have clearly established the truth of the reported massacres and other atrocities from which the Armenian people have suffered."*

January 27, 1896

**Concurrent Resolution of Congress**

*"Whereas the American people, in common with all Christian people everywhere, have beheld with horror the recent appalling outrages and massacres of which the Christian population of Turkey have been made victims..."*

**U.S. States**



In addition to the U.S. Congress, 39 U.S. states have adopted resolutions, proclamations and official statements recognizing the Armenian Genocide and commemorating its victims. These states include Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.

*"Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"*

**- Adolf Hitler**  
**Chancellor of Nazi Germany (1933-45)**

*"In 1915 the Turkish Government began and ruthlessly carried out the infamous general massacre and deportation of Armenians in Asia Minor."*

*"There is no reasonable doubt that this crime was planned and executed for political reasons."*

**- Winston S. Churchill**  
**Prime Minister of Great Britain (1940-45, 1951-55)**

*"...the Armenian massacre was the greatest crime of the war..."*

**- Theodore Roosevelt**  
**President of the United States (1901-09)**