

# ***The Forgotten Genocide: Armenia 1915***



# Reason

- Part of Ottoman Empire, Armenia wanted freedom
- At start of WWI, said they were supporting Russia, the OE's enemy



# Executions of Armenian leaders

- **February, 1915: Armenian men in army moved into labor groups, most eventually were killed.**
- **April, 1915: OE rounded up & arrested Armenian community leaders, nearly all of them executed.**



# Deportation Syria

- **The Turkish government ordered the Armenians to leave their homes in a few days. They organized the people into convoys and ordered them to walk to the Syrian desert to the south.**
- **The horrors of this march are revealed in this eyewitness account from a German missionary, Johannes Lepsius\*:**

**“The people brutally driven from home and land, separated from their families, robbed of everything they owned and stripped of all they carried underway, have been herded like cattle under the open skies without the least protection against heat and cold, almost without clothing, and were fed very irregularly, and always insufficiently. Exposed to every change in weather, the glowing sun in the desert, the wind and rain in spring and fall, and the bitter cold in winter, weakened through extreme want and their strength sapped by endless marches, deplorable treatment, cruel torture and the constant fear for their lives”**



# Deportation....



# Skulls of victims - the evidence left behind

- After leaving a village or a town, they separated males over 15 from the convoy. They shot or otherwise killed them.





# **Report From a German Missionary on a Massacre of Armenians in 1915**

- "The women, children, and straggling elderly were marched for miles on the Armenian plateau. They had to cross mountain passes and ravines on foot. Bands of Special Organization Units, organized by the government, killed many Armenians in attacks on the convoys. During the attacks women and children were often kidnapped and later sold to Turkish families as slaves. They routinely raped women and girls and mutilated their bodies."**

# **An Armenian boy who starved to death**

- Most who did not die of disease died of starvation. It was a new kind of genocide, the planned extermination of a people through natural causes. The government did not provide for food or water on their long march.**



# Calculated?

- **"When the measures to transport the entire population into the desert were adopted, no appropriations were made for any kind of nourishment. On the contrary, it is obvious that the government pursued a plan to let the people die of starvation. Even an organized mass-killing such as during the times when liberty, equality, and fraternity had not yet been proclaimed in Constantinople, would have been a much more human measure, since it would have saved these miserable people from the horrors of hunger and the slow death and the excruciating pains of tortures so fiendish that the most cruel of the Mongols could not have imagined them. But a massacre is less constitutional than death by starvation. Civilization is saved!"**  
**German missionary eyewitness Johannes Lespius**

# Armenian boys who died in Syria

- During the marches the lack of food and water led to disease which carried away more victims.



- **Less than 10% reached their destination.**
- **Those who made it to Syria, most eventually died.**
- **Estimates of the # of dead vary from 600,000 to 2 million. The U. N. Human Rights Sub-commission of 1985 puts the figure at "at least one million."**
- **The Turkish government denies that the genocide took place.**

## Shall Armenia Perish?

By Henry Morgenthau

Former Ambassador to Turkey, and National Vice-Chairman of Near East Relief

**T**WO hundred and fifty thousand Christian Armenian women enslaved in Turkish harems call to the people of America for liberation! One hundred thousand women already rescued by Near East Relief agents from harems will perish unless support from America is continued! Two hundred and fifty thousand children, orphaned by the unspeakable Turks, are calling in the only English they know, "Bread, Uncle Sam." One million two hundred thousand destitute, homeless, clothless adults look to the giant in the West for the succor that will keep them from annihilation. What shall our answer be?

If they were good enough to fight and die for us when we needed their help so sorely, are they not good enough to be given some crumbs from our plenty?

Since the beginning of the war, the Turkish Armenians have been largely refugees. A simple, agricultural people, they have been exiled from their farms and deprived of all opportunity to support themselves. Now, more than a year after the armistice, they are still living the life of nomads, able to continue alive only by virtue of American philanthropy. If ever unmerited suffering called for succor the plight of the Armenians should be heeded now. A few months more and it may be relief will come too late for those myriads whom only we can save.

Let the American slogan now become—Serve Armenians for a little while longer with life's necessities that they may be preserved for the day of national freedom and rebirth, which no people more truly and greatly deserves.

The belief, held by some persons, that Turkey has repented and can do no further harm, is without foundation. The group that led Turkey into the war on the side of Germany is now in the saddle. The Turk has not been disarmed and these leaders are now aiding the Tartars, Kurds and Bolsheviks are urging them on to

kill and rob the surviving Armenians at every opportunity. The deportations and massacres during the war were not spontaneous uprisings of unorganized mobs, but were the working out of a well-planned plan of wholesale extermination in which regular Turkish officers and troops took part as if in a campaign against an enemy in the field.

More than 2,000,000 persons were deported. The system was about the same everywhere. The Armenians, men, women and children, would be assembled in the marketplace. Then the able-bodied men would be marched off and killed by being shot or clubbed in cold blood at some spot which did not necessitate the trouble of burial.

Next the women would be sorted out. Agents of the Turk officers picked the youngest and fairest for their masters' harems. Next the civil officials had their pick, and then the remainder either were sold for one medjidi—a silver coin valued at about 80 cents—or were driven forth to be seized by the lower class Turks and Kurds.

As a last step, those who remained, mothers, grandmothers, children, were driven forth on their death pilgrimages across the desert of Aleppo, with no food, no water, no shelter, to be robbed and beaten at every halt, to see children slain in scores before their eyes, and babies dashed to death against rocks or spitted on the bayonets of the soldier guards.

If America is going to condone these offenses, if she is going to permit to continue conditions that threaten and permit their repetition, she is party to the crime. These peoples must be freed from the agony and danger of such horrors. They must not only be saved for the present but either thru governmental action or protection under the League of Nations they must be given assurance that they will be free in peace and that no harm can come to them.

New York



So gruesome a picture as this would be taboo in The Independent if the seriousness of the situation in Armenia now did not demand forceful illustration. These victims of a Turkish massacre typify thousands of Christian Armenians slaughtered by the Turks since the signing of the armistice.

# After the War & Hitler

- ***After the War:*** After their defeat in World War I, the new Ottoman government tried the leaders of the genocide and sentenced them to death in absentia. However within a few months the proceedings were suspended and the matter dropped. The Armenian survivors were not allowed to return to the Armenian plateau.
- In 1939 Adolf Hitler, on his way to the "final solution," made this statement on his plan for Poland:
- "I have issued the command - and I'll have anybody who utters but one word of criticism executed by a firing squad - that our war aim does not consist in reaching certain lines, but in the physical destruction of the enemy. Accordingly, I have placed my death-head formations in readiness - for the present only in the East - with orders to them to send to death mercilessly and without compassion , men, women, and children of Polish derivation and language. Only thus shall we gain the living space (*Lebensraum*) which we need. Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"



**Caption:** Scattered deportees in a desert wasteland, individually foraging as their only source of food. There is no shelter, water, or habitation in sight.



**Caption:** 1915, deportee camp of Armenians living under tents in the desert. All persons in the photo are in rags. Older man in foreground is picking lice from the head of a child, probably his daughter, as another girl looks on. Location: Ottoman empire, region Syria.



**Caption:** 1915, Armenian deportees living in the open desert with bedding as their only shelter. Tents are in view in background. Person on the right is a woman with unwashed hair, a child is in the center, and an older boy is sitting on the left. Location: Ottoman empire, region Syria.



**Caption:** 1915, Armenian deportees sleeping in the street -- mostly women who appear to be without families. Location: Ottoman empire, region Syria.





**Caption:** 1915-1916, murdered Armenian male adult lying in a ditch as children watch the corpse. Location: Ottoman empire, region Syria.



**Caption:** "Abandoned and murdered small children of the (Armenian) deportees, "according to the photographer, 1915-1916. Three are dead including stripped boy in gutter. Location: Ottoman empire, region Syria.



**Caption:** "A 15-year-old child who died of starvation," according to photographer, 1915-1916. Two boys with bare and bandaged feet starved to death in open desert. Location: Ottoman empire, region Syria.



**Caption:** 1915-1916, corpse of young Armenian adult male killed and stripped naked lying along a dirt road. Injuries to the head and lower chest are visible. Location: Ottoman empire, region Syria.